MY ROYAL CLIENTS

XAVIER PAOLI

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XAVIER PAOLI.

[*Frontispiece.*

MY ROYAL CLIENTS

BY

XAVIER PAOLI

LATE SPECIAL COMMISSARY ATTACHED TO THE
PARIS DETECTIVE-SERVICE

Translated by

ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS

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INTRODUCTION

FRANCE has been described by a latter-day historian as the holiday paradise of kings. The predilection shown by foreign potentates for visiting our country lays a heavy and a rather delicate responsibility upon its rulers. The French government has to take measures to ensure the safety of our royal guests and to arrange matters in such a way that a guard is kept around them which is not only constant and watchful, but, at the same time, sufficiently discreet to leave them the illusion of absolute freedom when they visit France incognito, together with the satisfaction of being able to throw off all constraint and mingle unreservedly with the crowd.

The fulfilment of this responsibility represented my task for five-and-twenty years. My duties began as soon as the government was advised, through diplomatic channels, of the approaching arrival of a sovereign or minor member of a royal house. I would receive from the Ministry of the Interior an official letter of appointment informing me of the place selected by our guest for his stay, the name and title under which he was travelling, the number and quality of the persons who were to accompany him, and the exact time at which the imperial or royal train would enter French territory. Furnished with these particulars, I at once packed my trunk and started with my secretaries for the watering-place or other health-resort at which the illustrious personage was expected. On arriving, I communicated with the prefect of the department, the mayor of the town, and the chief of the local police; I made minute enquiries concerning the people who were likely to come into contact with the royal visitor, especially the servants of the hotel at which he was to stay; I examined their papers and subjected them to an elaborate interrogatory. I next investigated the character of the foreigners living in the neighbourhood. Lastly, I studied the topography of the district. Excursions play a considerable part in the holidays of sovereigns. Whether they be young or old, whether they come from the south or from the north, sight-seeing and tripping generally constitute their favourite pastime. From the moment of their arrival to their departure, they enjoy roaming along the roads, in carriages or on foot; they want to visit every show-place and to explore all the country round about : a king abroad is something like a schoolboy on his holidays and loves to intoxicate himself with fresh air, with the sense of space and movement.

I, therefore, considered it very important to know all the walks and drives in the country beforehand : in this way I was able to discover which of them offered any danger, either because of their loneliness and the natural facilities which they offered for the laying of an ambuscade, or by reason of the suspicious individuals who were generally to be met there. I was also led to make these preliminary researches by a consideration of a purely aesthetic character. I knew how greatly my clients appreciated, from the point of view of their amusements, the disinterested advice of a person already acquainted with the district. I myself, on the other hand, always took a subtle pleasure in concealing from them, as far as possible, the overpowering and often irritating side of my mission. Officially the protector of the kings, I applied my mind to acting as their Baedeker, a Baedeker always open at the page which they wished to consult at the moment.

When my local enquiries were completed and the main lines of a discreet supervision fixed, when I had nothing more to learn about the people and places around, I set out to meet our guest, went to await his arrival at the frontier-station. I have a very clear recollection of those little railway-stations, often tucked away in some dull country-side, with that special animation of their own and that melancholy aspect, that mysterious and alarming atmosphere, which our imagination creates for them. How often have I not paced their platforms, peering into the distance, beyond the long ribbon of the railway-lines, for the first glimpse of a white lamp and a puff of smoke!

As soon as the special train pulled up at the platform, I was asked to step into the royal carriage. The presentation was quickly made, the welcome nearly always friendly; and nearly always the august traveller would say, with a smile:

"M. Paoli, we have met before."

I was invited, cordially and simply, to remain in the compartment and made to answer a number of questions about the country through which we were passing and that through which we were about to pass. The ice was broken; from that moment I entered upon my functions, which were of a manifold, although not of a fixed character. They were not, as I have explained elsewhere, limited to keeping a constant watch over the royal person; they were summed up more especially in this vaguely comprehensive formula: "To make our guest's stay in France as agreeable as possible, so that he may take back with him the best impression of our country," a mandate on the political importance of which I need hardly insist.

I began, therefore, by making enquiries among the persons forming the royal suite as to the sovereign's habits and tastes, not to say his peculiarities and fancies. I strove to forestall his wishes, to spare him the thousand and one little worries which no traveller, not even a king, is wholly able to avoid. I also taxed my ingenuity to ward off the intruders and petitioners—and their name is legion—who always beset the path of sovereign rulers.

When we reached our destination, the detectives in my service whom I had had posted at the railway-station either told me, with a glance, that all was well, or warned me, with a word in my ear, of a possible risk. In this way, I have often, at the last moment and without ever betraying my reason, had occasion respectfully but firmly to beg our guest to alter his route, or else to order the driver of the carriage to take a different road from that which he was supposed to follow.

Once installed at the hotel, I received daily telegraphic communications from our special provincial commissaries. Sometimes they would inform me of the presence in their department of a dangerous anarchist, who had had the impudence to make some threatening remark about our royal visitor; sometimes they would announce the sudden disappearance of suspected strangers; sometimes they advised me of the approaching arrival of some ill-intentioned individual. I took my measures in accordance and handed on the personal descriptions to the local police and gendarmery. Every evening, I dispatched to the Ministry of the Interior a cipher report, in which I set down the smallest incidents of the day. The reports were frequently sent to the President of the Republic, who, by this means, was kept informed of the impressions received by our guest. I was occasionally employed to act as an intermediary between the government and the sovereign, in connection with some wish which the latter may have expressed, or with the settling of some question of international etiquette which did not necessitate a more formal official interference, so that matters were arranged without our having to resort to the solemn and ponderous apparatus of diplomacy.

As I have shown, my functions were manifold. I frankly admit that the incessant activity which they compelled me to display has been amply rewarded by the interest of the recollections which they left in my mind. For twenty-five years, I have lived in the midst of an ever-changing portrait-gallery of sovereigns; I have had the opportunity of seeing and observing them in the intimacy of their private lives. During that quarter of a century, I have gathered many impressions; and it is these impressions which I now propose to record.

XAVIER PAOLI.

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CHAPTER I

THE EMPRESS ELIZABETH OF AUSTRIA

1

My reason for first evoking the infinitely fascinating and melancholy image of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria is that she presents a special type among the royal and imperial majesties to whose persons I was attached during their different stays in France; and this both on account of her life, which was one long romance, and of her death, which was a tragedy.

Hers was a strange, sad soul; and she disappeared suddenly, as in a dream of terror. She hovers round my memory crowned with the halo of unhappiness; and I at once think of her when I take up my pen.

The first time that I saw her was at Geneva; and I cannot recall this detail without emotion, for it was at Geneva that she was to die under the assassin's dagger. At the end of August 1895, the government received notice from the French Embassy in Vienna that the Empress was about to visit Aix-les-Bains in Savoy; she was to travel from her palace of Miramar through Italy and Switzerland; and, as usual, I received my formal letter of appointment from the

Ministry of the Interior, instructing me to go and meet the Empress at the international railway-station at Geneva. The letter was couched in the following terms:—

"FRENCH REPUBLIC

"MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

PARIS, 29 *August*, 1895.

"THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF THE DETECTIVE-SERVICE

"*To Monsieur Paoli, special commissary attached to the Criminal Investigation Department.*

"I have the honour to inform you that H.I.M. the Empress of Austria, Queen of Hungary, travelling in the strictest incognito under the name of *Countess Hohenembs* and proceeding to Aix-les-Bains, will arrive at the railway-station at Geneva on the 10th of September 1895 at 8.45 a.m.

"The imperial suite will be composed of the following persons:

"1. Countess Irma Sztaray, lady-in-waiting.

"2. His Excellency Major-General von Berzeviczy, *Oberstallmeister* (master of the horse).

"3. M. Marinaky, Greek reader.

"4. Ritter von Feifalick, secretary.

"5. Fräulein von Meissel, waiting-woman.

"6. Frau von Feifalick, dresser.

"7. Five men-servants.

"The bulk of the imperial luggage, consisting of sixty-three trunks, will be in charge of the footman Melchior Marz, who has been furnished with a passport and a special permit by the French Embassy in Vienna, and who will precede Her Imperial Majesty by a few hours. I hereby instruct you to ensure the safety of Her Imperial Majesty during her stay in French territory, to take all the necessary measures for this purpose, and also to see that her incognito is scrupulously respected.

"THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER
OF THE DETECTIVE-SERVICE."

I confess that, when I stepped into the train, I experienced a keen sense of curiosity at the thought that I was soon to find myself in the presence of the lady who was already surrounded by an atmosphere of legend, and who was known as "the wandering Empress." I had been told numerous more or less veracious stories of her restless and romantic life; I had heard that she talked little, that she smiled but rarely, and that she always seemed to be pursuing a distant dream.

My first impression, however, when I saw her alight from her carriage on the Geneva platform, was very different from that which I was prepared to receive. The Empress, at that time, was fifty-eight years of age. She looked like a girl; she had the figure of a girl, with a girl's lightness and grace of movement.

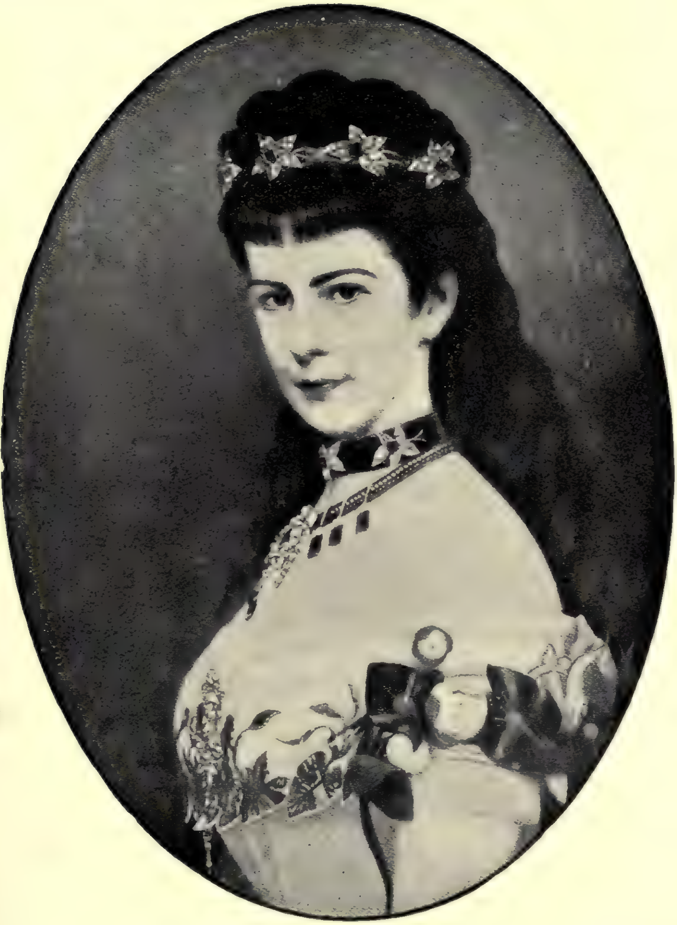
Tall and slender, with a touch of stiffness in her bearing, she had a rather fresh-coloured face, deep, dark and extraordinarily lustrous eyes, and a wealth of chestnut hair. I realized later that she owed her vivacious colouring to the long walks which she was in the constant habit of taking. She wore a smartly-cut tailor-made dress, all in black, which accentuated the slimness of her wasp-like waist. The beauty of her figure was a matter of which she was frankly vain: she had herself weighed every day.

I was also struck by the smallness of her hands, the musical intonation of her voice, and the purity with which she expressed herself in French, although she pronounced her words with a slightly guttural accent.

One disappointment, however, awaited me: my reception was icy cold. In spite of the experience which I had acquired during the exercise of my special functions, it left me disconcerted. My feeling of discomfort was still further increased when, on reaching Aix-les-Bains, General von Berzeviczy, whom I had asked for an interview in order to arrange for the organization of my department, answered, curtly:

"We sha'n't want anybody."

These four words, beyond a doubt, constituted a formal dismissal, an invitation both clear and concise to take the first train back to Paris. My position became one of singular embarrassment. Invested with a confidential mission, I began by inspiring distrust in the very persons to whom this mission was addressed; charged to watch and remove "suspects," I myself appeared to be more suspected than any!



THE EMPRESS ELIZABETH OF AUSTRIA.

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Nevertheless, I resolved that I would not be denied. I organized my service without the knowledge of our guests. Every morning, I returned to see General von Berzeviczy. Avoiding any allusion to the real object of my visit, I did my best to overcome his coldness. The general was a very kind man at heart, and a charming talker. I told him the gossip of the day, the news from Paris, the tittle-tattle of Aix. I advised excursions, mentioned the curiosities worth seeing, conscientiously fulfilled my part of Baedeker . . . and, when I carelessly questioned the general about the Empress's intentions as to the employment of her day, he forgot himself to the extent of telling me. This was all that I wanted to achieve.

In a week's time, we were the best of friends. The Empress had condescended to appreciate my attention in daily covering her table with newspapers and reviews. She gradually became accustomed to seeing me appear just in time to forestall her wishes. The game was won; and, when, later, curious to know the cause of what appeared to me to have been a misunderstanding, I asked General von Berzeviczy to explain the cause of his disappointing reception, he replied:

" It was simply because, when we go abroad, they generally send us officials who, under the pretence of protecting us, terrorize us. They appear to us like Banquo's ghost, with long faces and rolling eyes; they see assassins on every side; they poison and embitter our holidays. That is why you struck us at first as suspicious."

"And now?"

"Now," he answered, with a smile, "the experiment has been made. You have fortunately broken with a bad tradition. In your case, we forget the official and remember only the friend."

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In the course of the three visits which the Empress Elizabeth paid to France between 1895 and 1898, I had every opportunity of studying in the intimacy of its daily life that little wandering court swayed by the melancholy and alluring figure of its sovereign. She led an active and solitary existence. Rising, winter and summer, at five o'clock, she began by taking a warm bath in distilled water, followed by electric massage, after which, even though it were still dark, she would go out into the air, without informing her suite.

Clad in a black-serge gown of so simple a character that no well-to-do tradeswoman would have cared to be seen in it, laced boots and, on her head, either a plain black mantilla or a straw hat also trimmed with black, she walked at a smart pace along the paths of the garden, or, if it were raining, perambulated the long passages that run out of the halls or "lounges" of most hotels. Sometimes, she would venture on the roads and look for a fine site—by preference, the top of a rock—from which she loved to watch the sunrise.

She returned at seven o'clock and breakfasted lightly on a cup of tea, with a single biscuit. She then disappeared into her apartments and devoted two hours to her toilet.

Her second meal was taken at eleven and consisted of a cup of clear soup, an egg, and one or two glasses of meat-juice, extracted every morning from several pounds of fillet of beef by means of a special apparatus that accompanied her on her travels. She also tasted a light dish or two, with a preference for sweets. Immediately after lunch, she went out again, accompanied, this time, by her Greek reader.

This Greek reader was a very important person. He formed one of the suite on every journey. Selected from among the young scholars of the University of Athens and often appointed by the Greek government, he was changed year by year. I, for my part, have known three different readers. Their duties consisted in talking with the Empress in the Greek language, ancient and modern, both of which she spoke with equal facility.

This might have seemed a quaint fancy, but it was explained as soon as the Empress's mental condition was better known. Ever haunted by a melancholy past, romantic by temperament and poetic by instinct, she had sought a refuge in literature and the arts. Greece personified in her imagination the land of beauty which her dreams incessantly evoked; she had a passionate love for antiquity, loved its artists and its poets; she wished to be able, everywhere and at all times, when the obsession of her sad memories became too intense, to escape from the pitiless phantoms that pursued her and, in some way, to isolate her thoughts from the realities of life. The scholarly conversation of the young Greek *savant* made this effort easier for her; in the varied and picturesque surroundings which her aesthetic tastes demanded, she took Homer and Plato for her companions; and thus to the delight of the eyes was added the most delicate satisfaction of the mind.

The Greek reader, therefore, was the faithful companion of her afternoon walks, which lasted until dusk; and the Empress often covered a distance of fifteen to twenty miles on end. Dressed as in the morning and always in black, she carried, whatever the weather might be, an *en cas* and a fan. For twenty years, she had obstinately refused to allow herself to be photographed; she dreaded the indiscretion of amateur photographers; and no sooner did she perceive a camera aimed in her direction than she quickly unfurled her black feather fan and modestly concealed her features, leaving nothing visible but her great, wide, never-to-be-forgotten eyes, which still retained all the splendour and fire of youth.

The young Greek's duties, however, were not confined to talking to the Empress on her walks.

Sometimes the reader would read. Carrying a book which Her Imperial Majesty had selected beforehand, he read a few chapters to her during the rests by the roadside, on the mountain-tops, or at the deserted edge of the sea. Later, he added the daily budget of cuttings from the newspapers and reviews which I prepared for her, knowing the interest which she took in the current events of the day.

He also carried on his arm a dark garment, a skirt, to be exact. The Empress had the habit, in the course of her long walks, of changing the skirt in which she had started for one made of a lighter material. It was a question of health and comfort. This little change of attire was effected in the most primitive fashion. The Empress would disappear behind a rock or a tree, while the reader, accustomed to this rapid and discreet proceeding, waited in the road, taking care to look the other way. The Empress handed him the skirt which she had cast off; and the walk was resumed.

On returning to the hotel, she made a frugal dinner, consisting sometimes merely of a bowl of iced milk and some raw eggs washed down with a glass of Tokay, the whole forming an almost savage dietary to which she had forced herself, in order to preserve the slimness of figure which she prized so highly.

She took all her meals alone, in a private room, and seldom passed the evening with her suite. Its members hardly ever saw her; sometimes the lady-in-waiting spent day after day without setting eyes on her imperial mistress.

Of the different places in France which Her Imperial Majesty visited, the one which she loved above all others was Cap Martin, the promontory which separates the Bay of Monaco from that of Mentone. She came here for three years in succession, and returned to it each time with renewed pleasure. The softness of the climate, the wild beauty of the views, the splendour of the luxurious vegetation, and the poetic solitude of the pine-forests and orange-groves reminded her of her property of Achilleon in the island of Corfu and of her palace of Miramar on the shores of the Adriatic. She felt more at ease here than anywhere else; and here she created a charming home for herself. She selected as her residence the enormous hotel that stands at the end of the point, among the tall pines, the fields of rosemary, the clusters of myrtle and arbutus. The building, intended for the sojourn of princes and millionaires, combined something of the palace with something of the monastery. One could imagine, in fact, that a sovereign would love to have a retreat all to himself in that blue setting; and a community of monks also would have been extraordinarily happy in that solitude made for meditation and hope.

The hotel, which had been open to visitors for only about a year, was hardly known at the time when the Empress first went there in search of retirement and repose. It was recommended to her by the Empress Eugénie, who had stayed there while the Villa Cyrnos was being built; the poor Tsarevitch George, who was already attacked by the illness of which he was to die, had also lived in it for a short time.

The Empress Elizabeth occupied the ground-floor of the right wing, where she had a suite of six rooms on a corridor separated by a heavy red-velvet hanging from the public lounge. The windows opened on a terrace from which the eye took in the wonderful view extending from the picturesque houses rising in stages on the peninsula of Monaco to the verdant point of Bordighera, strewn with bright-coloured villas. Beyond the sunny coast-line and its rocky rampart, the immensity of the sea stretched its blue expanse, bathed in radiant light and covered with fleeting white sails, which the Empress loved to follow with her gaze until they disappeared below the horizon.

The furniture of the imperial apartments was marked by extreme simplicity combined with perfect taste, most of the pieces being of English workmanship. Her bedroom was just the ordinary hotel bedroom, with a brass bedstead surmounted by a mosquito-net, a mahogany dressing-table, and a few etchings hanging on the walls. On the other hand, the management had placed beside the bed, at her request, a set of electric bell-pushes distinguished by their colours—white, yellow, green and blue—which enabled her to summon that person of her suite whose presence she required, without having to disturb the others. She made it a rule to give as little trouble as possible; and, when, by chance, she had a request to make of one of the strange servants, she never addressed them but in terms of the most exquisite politeness. This happened but rarely, for her service was performed exclusively by her own two women, Frau von Feifalick and Fräulein von Meissel.

She was not at all difficult to please, although she certainly drove her love of cleanliness to an extreme pitch. In particular, she could not bear to have water, even for the purpose of her toilet, brought to her in any other vessel than glass-stoppered bottles. Her homeliness, it is true, proceeded less from an innate taste than from the severe discipline which she exercised over her habits. Thus she never slept on any but a hard mattress, a fact which one would have scarcely suspected from the aristocratic daintiness of her person.

In addition to the ground-floor, one other room was reserved for her on every Sunday during her visits. This was the billiard-room, which, on that day, was transformed into a chapel. When the Empress came to the Cap Martin Hotel for the first time, she enquired after a church, for she was very religious. There was none in the immediate neighbourhood: to hear mass, one had to go to the village of Roquebrune, the parish to which Cap Martin belongs. The Empress then decided to improvise a chapel in the hotel itself, and, for this purpose, selected the billiard-room, to which she could repair without attracting attention. But the rites of the Church require that every room in which mass is said should first be consecrated; and none save the bishop of the diocese is qualified to perform the consecration. A ceremony of this kind in an hotel billiard-room would have been rather embarrassing. The difficulty was overcome in a curious and unexpected manner. There is an old rule by virtue of which the great dignitaries of the religious Order of Malta enjoy the privilege of consecrating any room in which they drop their cloak. It was remembered that General von Berzeviczy, the Empress's chamberlain, occupied one of the highest ranks in the knighthood of Malta. He was, therefore, asked to drop his cloak in the billiard-room. Thenceforward, every Sunday morning, the Empress's footman put up a portable altar in front of the tall oak chimney-piece; he arranged a number of gilt chairs before it; and the old rector of Roquebrune came and said mass, served by a little acolyte, to whom the lady-in-waiting handed a gold coin when he went away.

The Empress, in fact, was extremely generous; and her generosity adopted the most delicate forms. Herself so sad, she wished to see none but happy faces about her. And so she always distributed lavish gratuities to all who served her; and she succoured all the poor of the country-side. Whenever, in the course of her walks, she saw some humble cottage hidden in the mountain among the olive-trees, she entered it, talked to the peasants, took the little children on her knees, and, as she feared lest the sudden offer of a sum of money might offend those whom she was anxious to assist, she employed the most charming subterfuges. She would ask leave to taste their fruit, paying for it royally . . . or else buying several quarts of milk, or dozens of eggs, which she would tell them to bring to the hotel next day. The good people were not aware of their customer's station : they took her for a rich foreigner who had had troubles of her own and who felt for the poverty of others; and often, at break of day, some of them would come down from the mountain with bunches of wild flowers, which they handed to the porter of the hotel for " the lady in black."

She ended, of course, by knowing all the walks at Cap Martin and the neighbourhood. She set out each morning with her faithful tramping-companion, the Greek reader. Sometimes she would go along the rocks on the shore, sometimes wend her way through the woods, sometimes she would climb the steep hills, scrambling " up to the goats," as the herds say. She never mentioned the destination or the direction of her excursions, a thing which troubled me greatly, notwithstanding that I had had the whole district searched and explored beforehand. How was I to look after her ?

" Set your mind at rest, my dear M. Paoli," she used to say, laughing. " Nothing will happen to me: what would you have them do to a poor woman? Besides, not one of us is more than the petal of a poppy, or a ripple on the water!"

Nevertheless, I was far from easy, the more so as she obstinately refused to let one of my men follow her, even at a distance. One evening, however, having heard that some Italian navvies, who were at work on the Mentone Road, had spoken in threatening terms of the crowned heads who are in the habit of visiting that part of the country, I begged the Empress to be pleased not to go in that direction and was promptly snubbed for my pains:

"More of your fears!" she replied. "I repeat, I am not afraid of them . . . and I make no promise."

I was determined. I redoubled my supervision and resolved to send one of my Corsican detectives, fully armed, disguised and got up as a navvy, with instructions to mix with the Italians who were breaking stones on the road. He rigged himself out in a canvas jacket and a pair of corduroy trousers, and made up his face to perfection. Speaking Italian fluently, he diverted all suspicion on the part of his mates, who took him for a newly-arrived fellow-countryman of their own.

He was there, lynx-eyed, with ears pricked up, doing his best to break a few stones, when suddenly a figure which he at once recognized appeared at a turn in the road. The night was beginning to fall: the Empress, accompanied by her reader, was on her way back to Cap Martin. Bending over his heap of stones, the sham navvy waited rather anxiously. When the Empress reached the group of road-menders, she stopped, hesitated a moment and then, noticing my man, doubtless because he looked the oldest, she went up to him and said, kindly :

" Is that hard work you're doing, my good man ? "

Not daring to raise his head, he stammered a few words in Italian.

" Don't you speak French ? "

" *No, signora.*"

" Have you any children ? "

" *Si, signora.*"

" Then take this for them," slipping a louis into his hand. " Tell them that it comes from a lady who is very fond of children."

And the Empress walked away.

That same evening, seeing me at the hotel, she came up to me with laughing eyes :

" Well, M. Paoli, you may scold me, if you like. I have been disobedient. I went along the Mentone Road to-day and I talked to a navvy."

It was my faithful Corsican.

Sometimes, she ventured beyond the radius of her usual walks. For instance, one afternoon, she sent for me on returning from a morning excursion :

" M. Paoli, you must be my escort to-day. You shall take me to the Casino at Monte Carlo : I have never been there. I must really, for once in my life, see what a gambling-room is like."

Off we went: the Empress, Countess Sztaray and I. It was decided that we should go by train. We climbed into a first-class carriage in which two English ladies were already seated. The Empress, thoroughly enjoying her incognito, sat down beside them. At Monte Carlo, we made straight for the Casino and walked into the roulette-room. The august visitor, who had slipped through the crowd of punters leaning over the tables, followed each roll of the ball with her eyes, looking as pleased and astonished as a child with a new toy. Suddenly she took a five-franc piece from her hand-bag:

"Let me see if I have any luck," she said to us. "I believe in number 33."

She put the big coin on number 33 *en plein.* At the first spin of the wheel, it lost. She put on another and lost again. The third time, number 33 turned up. The croupier pushed 175 francs across to her with his rake. She gathered it up and then, turning gaily to us, said:

"Let us go away quickly. I have never made so much money in my life."

And she dragged us from the Casino.

Whenever she went to Monte Carlo, she always took tea at Rumpelmayer's, the famous Viennese confectioner's, for, as I have already hinted, she adored pastry and sweets. The Rumpelmayer establishments at Mentone, Nice and Monte Carlo were well aware of the identity of this regular customer; but she had asked them not to betray her incognito. When there were many people in the shop, she would sit down at a little table near the counter; and nobody would have suspected that the simple, comely lady in black, who talked so familiarly with the girls in the pay-box and at the counter, was none other than Elizabeth Empress of Austria, Queen of Hungary.

At other times, she would walk out on the pretty Beaulieu Road, edged with villas whose flower-gardens were a subject of perpetual delight to her. Here she was constantly followed by those little curly-haired Italian boys who go about selling plaster statuettes. The sight of them moved her compassionate heart to pity:

"They are unhappy before their time," she would explain, as though in self-excuse. "Why not give them a trifling pleasure, when it costs so little?"

And she always bought their wares. The small Italians, of course, were overjoyed at this windfall, all the more as they were allowed to keep their statuettes, which they hastened to dispose of anew.

She also often went to Nice. Nevertheless, she preferred to the frequented roads those steep and secluded paths which clamber up the heights. Just at the back of Monte Carlo stands a very precipitous mountain of rocks: it is crowned by a fort of the first importance, known as the Fort de Mont-Angel and overlooking the long chain of the Alps. It is reached by a road seven miles long, built by the corps of engineers, and affords a glorious view of the mountains and the sea.

One day, the Empress said to me :

" May we visit the fort ? I should like to see it. If you will do what is necessary, we will go there the day after to-morrow."

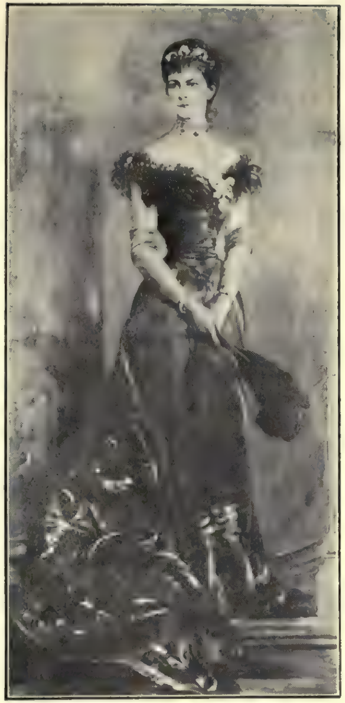
Admission to the fort was prohibited to the public. I therefore informed General Gebhardt, at that time Governor of Nice, of Her Majesty's wishes. The general, anxious to be polite, not only hastened to give the desired authorization, but sent orders to Captain Giacobbi, commanding the fort, to look out for the Empress's arrival, so that he might show her round.

Unfortunately, the Empress forgot her intention. The poor captain dared not leave his fort, as he expected to see her arrive at any moment. Days passed, days and weeks. His wife and children, who lived at Nice, were heart-broken at never seeing him. At the end of two months, unable to bear the separation any longer, he wrote and told me of his unhappy position. I decided to mention the matter to the Empress. Deeply distressed, she told the Emperor, who had just arrived. He at once asked General Gebhardt to countermand the captain's orders, and sent him the Cross of Francis Joseph by way of compensation.

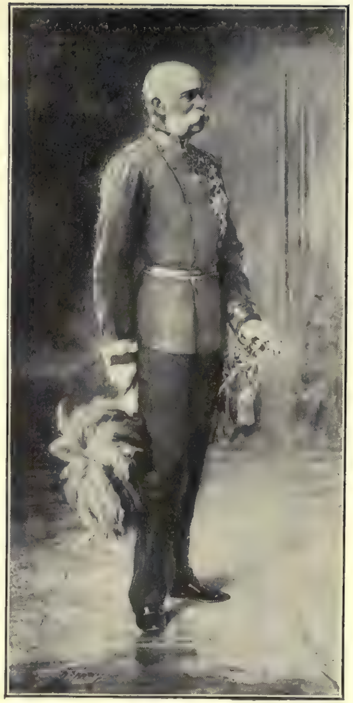
3

The Emperor joined the Empress on three occasions during her visits to Cap Martin. The event naturally created a diversion in the monotony of our sojourn. Though travelling incognito as Count Hohenembs, he was accompanied by a fairly numerous suite, whose presence added great animation to our little colony. I had, of course, to redouble my measures of protection and to send to Paris for an additional force of detective-inspectors. A telegraphic apparatus was installed at the hotel, to enable the sovereign to communicate direct with Vienna; and a gang of upholsterers busied themselves with decorating the apartments destined for his use and situated above those of the Empress.

Francis Joseph generally spent a fortnight with his consort. I thus had the opportunity of observing the touching affection which they displayed towards each other, notwithstanding the gossip of which certain sections of the press have made themselves the complacent echo. Nothing could be simpler or more charming than their meetings. As soon as the train stopped at Mentone Station, where the Empress went to wait its arrival, accompanied by her whole suite, in addition to the Austrian Consul, the Prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes, the Mayor of Mentone and myself, the Emperor sprang lightly to the platform and hastened, bare-headed, to the Empress, whom he kissed on both cheeks. His expressive face,



THE EMPRESS ELIZABETH.



THE EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH.

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framed in white whiskers, lit up with a kindly smile. He tucked the Empress's arm under his own and, with exquisite politeness, addressed a few gracious words to each of us individually.

During the Emperor's stay, the Empress emerged for a little while from her state of timid isolation. They walked or drove together, and received visits from the princes staying on the Côte d'Azur or passing through, notably Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, the Archduke Regnier, the then Tsarevitch, the Prince of Monaco, the King and Queen of Saxony, and the Grand-duke Michael. Sometimes they would call on the late Queen of England, at that time installed at Cimiez, or on the Empress Eugénie, their next neighbour. It was like a miniature copy of the court of Vienna, transferred to Cap Martin.

Francis Joseph, faithful to his habits, rose at five o'clock in the morning and worked with his secretaries. At half-past six, he stopped to take a cup of coffee, and then closeted himself once more in his study until ten. The wires were kept working almost incessantly between Cap Martin and Vienna : as many as eighty telegrams have been known to be dispatched and received in the course of a single morning. From ten to twelve, the Emperor strolled in the gardens with the Empress. Seen from a distance, they might have been taken for a honeymoon couple, so young did they both appear : she willowy, dainty and fragile; he thin, brisk and elegant, having retained the youthful figure of a cavalry subaltern, which was accentuated by the cut of his blue-serge suit and his knack of perching his black-felt hat a little on one ear.

The Empress usually lunched alone, on account of her special diet; on the other hand, she often dined at the imperial table. The dinners were marked by a certain amount of formality. The Emperor and the members of his suite sat down in evening-dress and decorations; the ladies in low-necked gowns. Francis Joseph drank nothing but dark lager beer, and, after dinner, lit a cigarette in a paper holder, which he subsequently threw away. On rising from table, the Emperor and Empress held a circle for a few minutes and then retired to their apartments. The two suites, on the other hand, stayed behind to chat; and, in this cosmopolitan frame provided by the hotel lounge, we were given a picture of the imperial ante-rooms at Schönbrunn. Groups formed among the wicker tea-tables and rocking-chairs. Here, Prince Lichtenstein, master of the horse, and Count Paar, principal aide-de-camp, laughed and talked with the ever-charming Baroness Miczi Sennyey, one of the prettiest women at the court of Vienna. A little farther, General von Berzeviczy sat talking with Dr. Kerzl, the Emperor's physician, while, near them, Countess Emsidel chatted with Chevalier Claudi, the travelling equerry, and Baron Weber von Ebenhoff and Baron Braun, the Emperor's private secretaries.

Francis Joseph often had General Gebhardt, the Governor of Nice, to dinner, and generally took a keen interest in military affairs. When he went to Mentone to return the visit which President Faure had paid him at Cap Martin, the French government sent a regiment of cuirassiers from Lyons to salute him. The Emperor, struck by the men's fine bearing, reviewed them and watched them march past.

It also occurred to me, during his stay in the south in the spring of 1896, to obtain an opportunity for His Imperial Majesty to witness a sham fight planned by the 87th battalion of Alpine chasseurs on the heights of Roquebrune. The manœuvres opened one morning at dawn in the marvellous circle of hills covered with olive-trees and topped by the snowy summits of the Alps. For two hours, the Emperor followed the incidents of the fight with close attention, not forgetting to congratulate the officers warmly at the finish.

On the next day, he invited the officer in command of the battalion, now General Baugillot, to luncheon. The major was a gallant soldier who was more accustomed to the language of the camp than to that of courts, and he persisted in addressing the Emperor as "Sire" and "Monsieur" by turns. Francis Joseph smiled and was greatly amused. At last, not knowing what to do, the major cried :

"I beg everybody's pardon ! I am more used to mess-rooms than to drawing-rooms ! "

The Emperor at once replied :

"Call me whatever you please. I much prefer a soldier to a courtier."

Francis Joseph, especially in his relations with women, possessed an exquisite and delicate courtesy that seemed to belong to a former century. After his last stay with the Empress at Cap Martin, they were both departing on the same day, he returning to Vienna, where urgent affairs of State required his presence, she going to Corfu, where she was called by her eternal longing for the land of the sun. They left the hotel together. The carriage taking them to the station was passing through the pines, when, suddenly, at a bend in the road, outlined against the green background of a palm-tree, appeared the figure of a woman in mourning, standing very upright under her white hair and still showing traces of sovereign beauty in the refinement of her features and the dignity of her stature. Leaning on her gold-knobbed cane, she seemed to be waiting for them; in fact, she made a sign to them. The Emperor at once alighted from the carriage with the Empress, took off his hat and, bowing very low, kissed the lady's hand. Then they talked, as they took a few steps in the heather. But time was passing; it was necessary to drive on. The Empress thereupon kissed her with every mark of respectful affection; the Emperor, greatly moved, once more made her a very deep bow. And the carriage drove off at a brisk trot with the august travellers, while the stately lady stood leaning on her tall stick and followed them with her eyes until they disappeared from sight.

They had taken leave of the Empress Eugénie, who little suspected that in the Empress Elizabeth's kiss there lay a last farewell.

4

Cap Martin and Aix were not the only places visited by the Empress of Austria. In the autumn of 1896, she was curious to see Biarritz; she returned there in the following year, when I again had the honour of accompanying her. The inclemency of the weather shortened the stay which she had at first intended to make; and yet the rough and picturesque poetry of the Basque coast had an undoubted attraction for her. She spent her days, sometimes, on the steepest points of the rocks, whence she would watch the tide for hours, often returning soaked through with spray; at other times, she would roam about the wild country that stretches to the foot of the Pyrenees, talking to the Basque peasants and interesting herself in their work.

She had a mania for buying a cow in every country which she visited for the first time. She chose it herself in the course of her walks, and had it sent to one of her farms in Hungary. As soon as she saw a cow the colour of whose coat pleased her, she would accost the peasant, ask the animal's price and tell him to take it to her hotel.

One day, near Biarritz, she saw a magnificent black cow, bought it then and there, gave her name of Countess Hohenembs to its owner, and sent him to the hotel with her purchase. When he arrived, however, and asked for Countess Hohenembs, the porter, who had not been prepared, took him for a madman and tried to turn him away. The peasant insisted, explained what had happened, and ended by learning that Countess Hohenembs was none other than the Empress of Austria. An Empress? But then he had been cheated! And he began to lament and shout and protest and lose his temper:

"If I'd known it was a queen," he yelled, "I'd have asked more money! I must have a bigger price!"

The discussion lasted for two hours, and I had to be called in to put a stop to it.

This was not the only amusing adventure that occurred during the Empress's stay at Biarritz. One day, returning from an excursion to Fuenterrabia, she stood waiting for a train on the platform of the little frontier-station at Hendaye. The reader, who was with her, had gone to ask a question of the station-master. The conversation seemed never-ending and the train arrived. The Empress, losing patience, called a porter:

"You see that gentleman in black?" she said. "Go and tell him to hurry, or the train will leave without us."

The porter ran to the reader and exclaimed:

"Hurry up, or your wife will go without you!"

The Empress, who rarely laughed, was much amused at this incident.

The strange form of neurasthenia from which she suffered, instead of decreasing with time, seemed to become more persistent and more painful as the years went on, and ended by gradually impairing her health. Not that the Empress had a definite illness : she simply felt an infinite lassitude, a perpetual weariness, against which she tried to struggle, with an uncommon amount of energy, by pursuing her active life in spite of it, her life of wandering and her long daily walks.

She hated medicine, and believed that a sane and simple plan of hygiene was far preferable to any number of doctor's prescriptions. One day, however, seeing her more tired than usual, I begged her permission to present her with a few bottles of Vin Mariani, of the restorative virtues of which I had had personal experience.

" If it gives you any satisfaction," she replied, with a smile, " I accept. But you must let me, in return, send you some of our famous Tokay, which is also a restorative and, moreover, very nice to take."

A little while after, Count von Wolkenstein-Trosburg handed me, on the part of the Empress, a beautiful liqueur-case containing six little bottles of Tokay; and I was talking of drinking it after my meals, like an ordinary dessert-wine, when the count said :

" Do you know that this is a very valuable present ? . . . The wine comes direct from the Emperor's estates. To give you an idea of what it is worth, I may tell you that, recently, at a sale in Frankfort, six small bottles fetched eleven thousand francs. . . . It stands quite alone."

I at once ceased to treat it as a common Madeira. The proprietor of the hotel, hearing of the gift which I had received, offered me five thousand francs for the six bottles. I need hardly say that I refused. I have four left, and I am keeping them.

Towards the end of that same year, 1897, when she was staying for the second time at Biarritz, the Empress, feeling more restless and melancholy than ever, resolved to go for a cruise in the Mediterranean on board her yacht *Miramar*. But she wished first to spend a few days in Paris.

She had engaged a suite of rooms at an hotel in the Rue Castiglione, and naturally desired to preserve the strictest incognito. Still, it was known that she was in Paris; and the protection with which I surrounded her was even more rigorous than before. She was out of doors from morning till evening, went through the streets on foot to visit the churches, monuments and museums, and, at four o'clock, called regularly at a dairy in the Rue de Surène, where she was served with a glass of ass's milk, her favourite beverage, after which she returned to the hotel.

One day, however, we had a great alarm: at seven o'clock she was not yet back. I anxiously sent to her sisters, the Queen of Naples and the Countess of Trani, to whom she occasionally paid surprise visits: she was not there. To crown all, she had succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the inspector who was charged to follow her at a certain distance. We had lost the Empress in the midst of Paris! Picture our mortal anxiety!

I was about to set out in person in search of her, when, suddenly, we saw her very calmly appearing.

"I have been gazing at Notre-Dame by moonlight," she said. "It was lovely. And I came back on foot along the quays. I went among the crowd and nobody took the least notice of me."

Just as at Biarritz and at Cap Martin, she spent her evenings alone and withdrew to her room at a very early hour. She liked the members of her suite, however, to take advantage of the leisure which she gave them to amuse themselves.

I remember, in this connection, that her Greek reader, at that time Mr. Barker, and her secretary, Dr. Kromar, expressed a wish to see something of the picturesque and characteristic side of Paris; and I took them one evening to the Central Markets. When we had finished our visit, I invited them, in accordance with the traditional custom,to come and have a plate of *soupe à l'oignon* in one of the little common eating-houses in the neighbourhood. Delighted with this modest banquet, they described their outing to the Empress next day, and sang the praises of our famous national broth, which she had never tasted.

"M. Paoli," she said, enthusiastically, "I must know what *soupe à l'oignon* is like. Mr. Barker has given me a most tantalizing description."

"Nothing is easier, ma'am: I will tell the people of the hotel to make you some."

"Never! They will send me up a carefully prepared soup which won't taste in the least like yours. And I must have it served in the identical crockery: I want all the local colour."

Here I must make a confession: as I had it at heart—it was a question of patriotism, no less—that the Empress should not be disappointed, I thought it more prudent to apply to the manager of the hotel, who, kindly lending himself to my innocent fraud, prepared the onion soup and sent to the nearest bazaar for a plate and soup-tureen of the "local colour" in which the imperial traveller took so great an interest. The illusion was perfect. The Empress thought the soup excellent and the crockery delightfully picturesque: true, we had chipped it a little, with that object in view!

The Empress's only visit to Paris was a short one: as I have said, she had decided that year to air her melancholy on the blue waters of the Mediterranean. The projected cruise embraced a number of calls at different harbours along the Côte d'Azur; and she asked me to accompany her.

We left Paris on the 30th of December for Marseilles, where the imperial yacht lay waiting for us. commanded by a very distinguished officer, Captain

Moritz Sacks von Bellenau; and we were at sea, opposite the sinister Château d'If, on the 1st of January of the year 1898, which was to prove so tragic to Elizabeth of Austria. I offered her my wishes for happiness and a long life. The Empress seemed to me sadder and more thoughtful that morning than usual:

"I wish you also," she said, "health and happiness, for you and yours." And she added, with an expression of infinite bitterness, "As for myself, I have no confidence left in the future."

Had she already received a presentiment of what the year held in store for her? Who can tell?

She gave us but little of her society during this voyage. She spent her days on deck and interested herself in the silent activity, in the humble, poetic life of the crew. The sailors entertained a sort of veneration for her. They were constantly feeling the effects of her discreet and delicate kindness. Like ourselves, they respected her melancholy and her love of solitude. And, in the evenings, while the little court collected in the saloon and amused itself with different games, or else improvised a charming concert; while, at the other end of the ship, the sailors, seated under the poop, sang their Tyrolean or Hungarian songs to an accordion accompaniment, the Empress, all alone on deck, with her eyes staring into the distance, would dream of the stars.

On leaving Marseilles, we went to Villefranche, near Nice, skirting the coast. The Empress also wished to stop at Cannes and to see once more, from the sea, Monaco, Cap Martin, Mentone. She next proposed to revisit Sicily, Greece and Corfu : it was as though she felt a secret desire to make a sort of pilgrimage to all the ephemeral landmarks which her sad soul had erected in the course of her wandering life.

However enjoyable this cruise might be to me, I had to think of abandoning it. My service with the Empress ended automatically as soon as she had left French waters.

" Stay on, nevertheless," she said, kindly. " You shall be my guest; and I will show you my beautiful palace in Corfu."

But my duties, unfortunately, summoned me elsewhere. I had to return to Nice, to receive the King and Queen of Saxony, who were expected there. It was decided, therefore, that I should leave the *Miramar* at San Remo. When the yacht dropped her anchor outside the little Italian town, I said good-bye to the Empress and to my charming travelling companions.

" It is not for long, for I shall come back to France," said Elizabeth.

She leant over the bulwarks, as the yacht's launch took me on shore, and I watched her delicate and careworn features first outlined against the disc of the setting sun and then merging, little by little, in the distance and the darkness.

5

Seven months had elapsed since the day when I left the Empress at San Remo. I was in Paris and read in the papers that she had just arrived at Caux, a picturesque little place situated above Montreux and overlooking the Lake of Geneva. I hastened to write, on chance, to Mr. Barker, her Greek reader, in order to receive her news. When I came home, on the evening of the 9th of September, I was handed Mr. Barker's reply, which ran as follows :—

"CAUX, 8 *September*, 1898.

"MY DEAR M. PAOLI,

"I was very pleased to receive your valued letter of the 6th instant, for which accept my best thanks.

"Her Majesty proposes to spend the month of September at Caux, but I do not know what Her Majesty will do after that. Her Majesty commands me to say that she will be happy to see you here if your business should bring you to Geneva. At the same time, Her Majesty sends you her best greetings. Her Majesty intends to go to Nice (Cimiez) on the 1st of December, and she hopes that the ministry will attach you to her person.

"I must now thank you for all the news which you have given me about yourself. As for me, I am very well and am enjoying our stay at Caux.

" Her Majesty leaves to-morrow for Geneva, where she will spend two days. Countess Sztaray is going with Her Majesty. Dr. Kromar left yesterday, to take rooms for Her Majesty at the Hôtel Beau Rivage.

" Field-marshal von Berzeviczy remains with me at Caux.

" I do not know whether I wrote to you that the general was created a field-marshal some time ago.

" Pray remember me very kindly to your son, and believe me,

" dear M. Paoli,
" yours most sincerely,
" FREDERIC G. BARKER."

The Empress was to spend forty-eight hours at Geneva. As I was on leave and had nothing to keep me in Paris, why should I not go and pay my respects to the august lady who had so kindly expressed the hope of seeing me again ? I at once made up my mind and, the next morning, took the train for Geneva. I calculated that, arriving in the evening, I had a chance of still finding the Empress at the Hôtel Beau Rivage; besides, nothing need prevent me from going, next day, to Caux, where I was sure to see her and, at the same time, to have an opportunity of shaking hands with Field-marshal von Berzeviczy and Mr. Barker. Who would have thought that the train which carried me through the plains of Burgundy and Franche-Comté was taking me straight to the scene of a sad and blood-stained tragedy ?

When we drew into the station at Geneva, I noticed an unwonted animation on the platforms : groups of people stood engaged in excited discussion, with a look of consternation on their faces. I paid no particular attention, however, for I was in a hurry. I hailed a fly and told the man to drive to the Hôtel Beau Rivage. We had not gone twenty yards, when he turned round on his box :

" What an awful crime ! " he said.

" What crime ? "

" Haven't you heard ? The Empress was assassinated this afternoon."

" Assassinated ! "

Livid and scared, I could hardly listen to the pitiful story of the tragedy. The Empress, it seemed, had been stabbed to the heart by an Italian anarchist, when about to embark on the 1.40 steamer for Territet; she sank down on the Quai du Mont-Blanc; the people around her thought that she had fainted and carried her on board the boat : when they bent over her, she was dead.

Dead ! It was true, it was really true; if not, what was that great silent, motionless crowd doing on the Place Brunswick ? The crowd was innumerable, increased incessantly during the night and kept its eyes fixed unweariedly upon two windows with closed shutters. I sprang quickly from the carriage, when it stopped at the hotel, rushed into the hall, which was full of people, flew up the crowded staircase and along a corridor in which English, German and Russian travellers were hustling one another, with scared faces, all anxious to see. At last, catching sight of a servant :

" Countess Sztaray ? " I asked.

" In there," he replied, pointing to a door standing ajar.

I knocked, the door opened and Countess Sztaray, red-eyed, her features distorted with grief, gave me a heart-broken look and, with a sob, said :

" Our poor Empress ! "

" Where is she ? "

" Come with me."

Taking me by the hand, she led me and Field-marshal von Berzeviczy, who had just arrived, to the next room. There lay the Empress, stiff and already cold, stretched on a little brass bed under a thin white-gauze veil. Her face, lit by the flickering flame of two tall candles, showed no trace of suffering. A sad smile seemed still to hover over her pale and lightly-parted lips; two long tresses fell upon her slim shoulders; the delicate features of her face had shrunk; two purple shadows under her eyelids threw into relief the sharp outline of her nose and the pallor of her cheeks. She appeared as though sleeping peacefully and happily. Her tiny hands were crossed over an ivory crucifix; some roses, now almost withered—roses which she had picked that morning and which she was carrying in her arms when she received her death-blow—lay scattered at her feet.

I stood long contemplating the corpse. My self-possession deserted me. In spite of myself, the tears came to my eyes and I cried like a child.

* * * * * *

Why had fate decreed that the Empress should go to Geneva ? Curiously enough, the idea came to her suddenly, it appeared, on Thursday the 8th of September. She had arranged to pay a visit to her friend, Baronne Adolphe de Rothschild, who was staying at her country-house, the Château de Pregny, at the western end of the lake. But it was a long excursion to make in a single day; and the Empress, contrary to the advice of Countess Sztaray, decided to sleep at Geneva, after leaving Pregny, and not to return to Caux until the following afternoon. She arrived at the Hôtel Beau Rivage in the evening and went out after dinner. She was up, next day, at five o'clock. After occupying a portion of her morning with the complicated cares of her toilet and her correspondence, she went for a walk along the shady quays of the Rhône. Returning to the hotel at one o'clock, she hurriedly drank a glass of milk. Then, accompanied by her lady-in-waiting, Countess Sztaray, she hastened down to the steamboat-pier, intending to take the Territet boat that started at 1.40. She had come to within two hundred yards of the foot-plank connecting the steamer with the Quai du Mont-Blanc, when Lucchini flung himself upon her and struck her a blow under the left breast with a three-cornered file clumsily fitted to a wooden handle. The violence of the blow broke her fourth rib.

Death was not instantaneous. She had the strength to walk as far as the boat; and for this reason: the instrument, in its course, had pierced the left ventricle of the heart from top to bottom. But, the blade being very sharp and very thin, the hemorrhage at first was almost insignificant. The drops of blood escaped but slowly from the heart and its action was not impaired so long as the pericardium, in which the drops were collecting, was not full. This was how she was able to go a fairly long distance on foot with a stab in her heart. When the bleeding increased, the Empress sank to the deck. Had the weapon remained in the wound, she could have lived longer still. The Duc de Berry, who was stabbed in exactly the same manner as the Empress, lived for four hours, because Louvel did not draw the dagger from the wound.

The poor Empress, therefore, had the energy to drag herself to the boat, where a band of gipsies was playing Hungarian dances (a cruel irony of chance) while the steamer began to move away from the landing-stage. At that moment, she fainted. Countess Sztaray, who believed her to be stunned by a blow of the fist—for no one had seen the weapon in the assassin's hand—tried to bring her to with smelling-salts. The Empress recovered consciousness, spoke a few words, cast a long look of bewildered astonishment around her and then, suddenly, fell back dead. The dismay and excitement were intense. The boat at once put back to the pier; and, as there was no litter at hand, the body was carried to the hotel, shrouded in sails, on an improvised bier of crossed oars.

Had the Empress received a presentiment of her tragic end, which a gipsy at Wiesbaden and a fortune-teller at Corfu had foretold her in the past ? Two strange incidents incline one to think so. On the eve of her departure for Geneva, she asked Mr. Barker to read her a few chapters of a book by Marion Crawford entitled *Corleone*, in which the author describes the detestable customs of the Sicilian Mafia. While the Empress was listening to this harrowing story, a raven, attracted by the scent of some fruit which she was eating, came and circled round her. Greatly impressed, she tried to drive it off, but in vain, for it constantly returned, filling the echoes with its mournful croaking. Then she rapidly walked away, for she knew that ravens are harbingers of death when their ill-omened wings persist in flapping around a living person.

Again, Countess Sztaray told me that, on the morning of that day, she went into the Empress's room, as usual, to ask how she had slept, and found her imperial mistress looking pale and sad.

"I have had a strange experience," said Elizabeth. "I was awakened in the middle of the night by the bright moonbeams which filled my room, for the servants had forgotten to draw the blinds. I could see the moon from my bed and it seemed to have the face of a woman weeping. I don't know if it is a presentiment, but I have an idea that I shall meet with misfortune."

During the three days that preceded the departure of the remains for Vienna, I stayed and shared the funeral watches with the little court, once so happy and now so pitifully robbed of its mistress. Field-marshal von Berzeviczy, Countess Sztaray and I sat for long hours conjuring up the memory of her who was now sleeping her last sleep beside us. Countless anecdotes were told, countless tiny and charming details. It already seemed almost a distant past which we were for the last time recalling, a bright and exquisite past which the gracious Empress was taking away with her.

I went to see the murderer in his cell. I found a perfectly lucid being, boasting of his crime as of an act of heroism. When I asked him what motive had driven him to choose for his victim a woman, a sovereign living as far removed as possible from politics and the throne, one who had always shown so much compassion for the humble and the destitute :

"I struck at the first crowned head," he said, "that came along. I don't care. I wanted to make a manifestation and I have succeeded."

The unhappy Empress's destiny was to be strange and romantic until the end, until after her death. Her body, carried to an hotel bedroom, started for Austria without pomp or display, amid an immense and silent crowd. The Swiss government had not the time to levy a regiment to show her the last honours. But it was better so, for she had, as her escort, a reverent and contemplative nation and, as her salute, the bells of all the towns and all the villages through which the funeral train passed. And this, I am certain, was just the simple and poetic homage which her heart would have desired.

* * * * * *

A few days after the tragedy, the Emperor Francis Joseph deigned to remember my respectful attachment to the consort whom he had loved so well; and I received the following telegram :—

"WIENBURG, 15 *September*, 1898.

"*To M. Paoli, Ministry of the Interior, Paris.*

"His Majesty the Emperor, greatly touched by your sincere sympathy, remembers gratefully the devoted care which you showed the late Empress and thanks you again with all his heart.

"PAAR,
"*Principal Aide-de-camp to*
H.I.M. the Emperor of Austria."

I also received from the archduchesses, the daughters, a hunting-knife which their mother, the poor Empress, had valued very highly. I keep it religiously in my little museum. Sometimes, I take it out and look at it; and it invariably summons up one of the saddest and most touching memories of my life.

CHAPTER II

KING ALFONSO XIII

1

" You wanted me, to complete your collection, did you not, M. Paoli ? "

The presidential train had left Hendaye; the distant strains of the Spanish national anthem still reached our ears through the silence and the darkness. Leaning from the window of the sleeping-car, I was watching the last lights of the little frontier-town disappear one by one.

I turned round briskly at the sound of that gay and clear voice. A tall, slim young man stood at the door of the compartment, with a cigarette between his lips and a soft felt hat on his head, and gave me a friendly little wave of the hand. His long, slender figure looked very smart and supple in a pale-grey travelling-suit; and a broad smile lit up his bronzed face, his smooth, boyish face, adorned with the large, hooked nose of the Bourbons, planted like an eagle's beak between two very dark eyes, full of fire and fun.

"Yes, yes, M. Paoli, I know you, though perhaps you don't know me yet. My mother has often spoken to me of you, and when she heard that you had been appointed to watch over my safety, she said, ‘ With Paoli, I feel quite at ease.’ ”

“ I am infinitely touched and flattered, Sir,” I replied, “ by that gracious mark of confidence. . . . It is true that my collection was incomplete without Your Majesty.”

That is how I became acquainted with H.M. Alfonso XIII. in the spring of 1905, at the time of his first official visit to France. “ The little King,” as he was still called, had lately completed his nineteenth year. He had attained his majority a bare twelvemonth before and was just entering upon his monarchical career, if I may so express myself. The watchful eyes of Europe were beginning to observe, with sympathetic interest, the first actions of this young ruler, who, with the exuberant grace of his gloriously confident youth, supplied a startling and amusing contrast with the somewhat constrained formality of the gallery of sovereigns. Though he had no history as yet, plenty of anecdotes were already current about him and a number of morals were drawn in consequence.

“ He has a nature built up of impulse,” said one.

“ He is full of character,” said people who had met him.

“ He is like his father : he would charm the bird from the tree,” an old Spanish diplomatist remarked to me.

“ At any rate, there is nothing commonplace about him,” thought I, still perplexed by the unconventional, amusing, jocular way in which he had interrupted my nocturnal contemplations.

No, he was certainly not commonplace ! The next morning, I saw him at early dawn at the windows of the saloon-carriage, devouring with a delighted curiosity the sights that met his eyes as the train rushed at full speed through the verdant plains of the Charente. Nothing escaped his youthful enthusiasm : fields, forests, rivers, things, people. Everything gave rise to sparkling exclamations :

" What a lovely country yours is, M. Paoli ! " he cried, when he saw me standing near him. " I feel as if I were still at home, as if I knew everybody : the faces all seem familiar. It's ' stunning ! ' "

At the sound of this typical Parisian expression (the French word which he employed was *épatant*) proceeding from the royal lips, it was my turn to be " stunned." In my innocence, I was not yet aware that he knew all our fashionable slang phrases and used them freely.

His spirits were as inexhaustible as his bodily activity; and, upon my word, we were hard put to it to keep up with him. Now running from one window to another, so as to " miss nothing," as he said, with a laugh; now leaning over the back of a chair or swinging his legs from a table; now striding up and down the carriage, with his hands in his pockets and the everlasting cigarette between his lips, he questioned us without ceasing. He wanted to know everything, though he knew a great deal as it was. The army and navy excited his interest in the highest degree; the provinces through which we were passing, their customs, their past, their administrative organization, their industries, supplied him with the subjects of an exhaustive interrogatory, to which we did our best to reply. Our social laws, our parliament, our politicians aroused his lively curiosity as eagerly . . . and then came the turn of Paris, that Paris which he was at last about to see, whose splendours and peculiarities he already knew from reading and hearsay, that Paris which he looked upon as a fairy-land, a promised land; and the thought that he was to be solemnly welcomed there sent a slight flush of excitement to his cheeks.

"It must be wonderful!" he said, his eyes ablaze with pleasurable impatience.

He also insisted upon our giving him full details about the persons who were to receive him:

"What is M. Loubet like? And the prime minister? And the Governor of Paris?"

When he was not putting questions, he was telling stories, recalling his impressions of his recent journeys in Spain:

"Confess, M. Paoli," he said, suddenly, "that you have never had to look after a king as young as I."

His conversation, jesting and serious by turns, studded with judicious reflections, with smart sallies, with whimsical outbursts and unexpected digressions, revealed a young and keen intelligence, eager after knowledge, a fresh mind open to effusive ideas, a quivering imagination, counterbalanced, however, by a reflective brain. I remember the astonishment of the French officers who had come to meet him at the frontier, on hearing him discuss matters of military strategy with the authority and the expert wisdom of an old tactician; I remember also the surprise of a high official who had joined the train mid-way and to whose explanations the King was lending an attentive ear when we crossed a bridge over the Loire, in which some water-fowl happened to be disporting themselves.

"Oh, what a pity!" the King broke in. "Why haven't I a gun?" And, taking aim with an imaginary fowling-piece, "What a fine shot!"

Again, I remember the spontaneous and charming way in which, full of admiration for the beauties of our Touraine, he tapped me on the shoulder and cried:

"There's no doubt about it, I love France! France for ever!"

What was not my surprise, afterwards, at Orleans, where the first official stop was made, to see him appear in his full uniform as captain-general of the Spanish army, his features wearing an air of singular dignity, his gait proud and lofty, compelling in all of us a respect for the impressive authority that emanated from his whole person! He found the right word for everybody, was careful of the least shades of etiquette, moved, talked and smiled amid the gold-laced uniforms with a sovereign ease, showing from the first that he knew better than anybody how to play his part as a king.

There is one action, very simple in appearance, but in reality more difficult than one would think, by which we can judge a sovereign's bearing in a foreign country. This is his manner of saluting the colour. Some, as they pass before the standard surrounded by its guard of honour, content themselves with raising their hand to their cap or helmet; others stop and bow; others, lastly, make a wide and studied gesture which betrays a certain, almost theatrical affectation. Alfonso XIII.'s salute is like none of these: in its military stiffness, it is at once simple and grave, marked by supreme elegance and profound deference. On the platform of the Orleans railway-station, opposite the motionless battalion, in the presence of a number of officers and civil functionaries, this salute, which so visibly paid a delicate homage to the army and the country, this graceful and respectful salute moved and flattered us more than any number of toasts and speeches. And, when, at last, I went home, after witnessing the young King's arrival in the capital and noticing the impression which he had made on the government and the people, I recalled the old Spanish diplomatist's remark:

"The King would charm the bird from the tree!"

2

I saw little of King Alfonso during his first stay in Paris. The protection of sovereigns who are the official guests of the government did not come within the scope of my duties. I therefore left him at the station and was not to resume my place in his suite until the moment of his departure. The anarchist and revolutionary gentry appeared to be unaware of this detail, for I daily received a fair number of anonymous letters, most of which contained more or less vague threats against the person of our royal visitor. One of them, which the post brought me as I was on the point of proceeding to the gala performance given at the Opera in his honour, struck me more particularly because of the plainness of the warning which it conveyed, a warning devoid of any of the insults that usually accompany this sort of communication:—

"In spite of all the precautions that have been taken," it read, "the King had better be careful when he leaves the Opera to-night."

This note was written in a rough, disguised hand, and was, of course, unsigned. I at once passed it on to the right quarter. The very strict supervision that was being exercised no doubt excluded the possibility of a successful plot. But there remained the danger of an individual attempt, the murderous act of a single person; and I knew by experience that, to protect one's self against that, one must rely exclusively upon "the police of Heaven," to use the picturesque expression of Señor Maura, the Spanish premier.

Haunted by a baneful presentiment, I nevertheless decided, on leaving the Opera, to remain near the King's carriage (as a mere passer-by, of course) until he had stepped into it with M. Loubet and driven off, surrounded by his squadron of cavalry. The attempt on his life took place at the corner of the Rue de Rohan and the Rue de Rivoli; and both the King and M. Loubet enjoyed a miraculous escape from death. My presentiment, therefore, had not been at fault.

I need not here recall the coolness which the young monarch displayed in these circumstances, for it is still present in every memory, nor the magnificent indifference with which he looked upon the tragic incident.

"I have received my baptism of fire," he said to me, a couple of days later, "and, upon my word, it was much less exciting than I expected!"

Alfonso XIII., in fact, has a fine contempt for danger. Like the late King Humbert, he considers that assassination is one of the little drawbacks attendant on the trade of king. He gave a splendid proof of this courage at the time of the Madrid bomb, of which I shall speak later; and I was able to see it for myself two days after the attempted assassination in the Rue de Rohan.

On leaving Paris, our royal visitor went to Cherbourg, where I accompanied him, to embark on board the British royal yacht, which was to take him to England. As we approached the town in the early morning, the presidential train was shunted to the special line that leads direct to the dockyard. Suddenly, while we were running pretty fast, a sharp stop took place, producing a violent shock in all the carriages. The reader can imagine the excitement. The railway-officials, officers and chamberlains of the court sprang out on the permanent way and rushed to the royal saloon.

"Another attempt?" asked the King, calmly smiling, as he put his head out of the window.

We all thought so at the first moment. Fortunately, it was only a slight accident: the rear luggage-van had left the rails through a mistake in the shunting. I hastened to explain the matter to the King.

"You'll see," he at once replied, "they will say, all the same, that it was an attempt upon my life: I must let my mother know quickly, or she will be frightened."

The King was right. Some one, we never discovered who, had already found means to telegraph to Queen Maria Christina that a fresh attack had been made on her son. There are always plenty of bearers of ill-news, even where sovereigns are concerned . . . and especially when the news is false!

I took leave of the King at Cherbourg and joined him, the week after, at Calais, whence I was to accompany him to the Spanish frontier, for he was returning straight to his own country. This time, the official journey was over; and I once more found the pleasant, simple young man, in the pale-grey suit and the soft hat. The warm welcome which he had received in England had not wiped out his enthusiastic recollections of France.

" By George," he declared, " how glad I am to see this beautiful country again, even through the windows of the railway-carriage ! "

A violent shower set in as we left Calais. The train went along a line in process of repair and had to travel very slowly. At that moment, seeing some gangs of navvies working under the diluvial downpour and soaked to the skin, the King leant out of the window and, addressing them :

" Wait a bit ! " he said. " This will warm you. I'll give you something to smoke."

And the King, after emptying the contents of his cigarette-case into their horny hands, took the boxes of cigars and cigarettes that lay on the tables, one after the other, and passed them through the window, first to the delighted labourers and then to the soldiers drawn up on either side of the line. They had never known such a windfall : it rained Upmanns, Henry Clays and Turkish cigarettes. When none were left, the King appealed to the members of his suite, whom he laughingly plundered for the benefit of those decent fellows. They, not knowing his quality, shouted gaily :

"Thank you, sir, thank you! Come back soon!"

We had but one regret, that of remaining without anything to smoke until we were able, at the next stop, to replenish our provisions of tobacco which had been exhausted in so diverting a fashion.

When, on the following morning, we reached Hendaye, which is the frontier-station between France and Spain, a very comical incident occurred that amused the young traveller greatly. By a purely fortuitous coincidence, a crowd was waiting, as we pulled up, for the train of the late King Carlos of Portugal, who was also about to pay an official visit to France; and the authorities and troops had collected on the platform to show the usual honours to this new guest. Our sudden arrival, for which nobody was prepared, as Alfonso XIII. was not now travelling officially, utterly disconcerted the resplendent crowd. Would the King of Spain think that they were there on his account, and would he not be offended when he discovered his mistake? It was a difficult position, but the prefect rose to the occasion. As the King of Portugal's train was not yet signalled, he gave orders to pay the honours to Alfonso XIII.

The moment, therefore, that our train stopped, the authorities and general officers hurried in our direction and the band of the regiment, which had been practising the Portuguese royal anthem, briskly struck up the Spanish hymn instead.

But the King, who knew what was what, leant from the window and, chaffingly, cried :

“ Please, gentlemen, please ! I know that you are not here for me, but for my next-door neighbour ! ”

At Irun, the first Spanish station, where I was to take leave of our guest, a fresh surprise awaited us. There was not a trace of police protection, not a soldier, not a gendarme. An immense crowd had freely invaded both platforms. And such a crowd ! Thousands of men, women and children shouted, sang, waved their hands, hustled one another and fired guns into the air for joy, while the King, calm and smiling, elbowed his way from the presidential to the royal train, patting the children's heads as he passed, paying a compliment to their mothers, distributing friendly nods to the men who were noisily cheering him. And I thought of our democratic country, in which we imprison the rulers of States in an impenetrable circle of police supervision, whereas here, in a monarchical country, labouring under a so-called reign of terror, the sovereign walks about in the midst of strangers, unprotected by any precautionary measures. It was a striking contrast.

But my mission was at an end. Still laughing, the King, as he gave me his hand, said :

“ Well, M. Paoli, you can no longer say that you haven't got me in your collection ! ”

“ I beg your pardon, Sir,” I replied. “ It's not complete yet.”

" How do you mean ? "

" Why, Sir, I haven't your portrait."

" Oh, we must see to that ! " And, turning to the lord steward of his household, " Santo Mauro, make a note : photo for M. Paoli."

A few days after, I received a photograph, signed and dated by the royal hand.

3

Five months later, Alfonso XIII., returning from Germany, where he had been to pay his accession-visit to the court of Berlin, stopped to spend a day incognito in Paris. I found him as I had left him : gay, enthusiastic, full of good-nature, glad to be alive.

" Here I am again, my dear M. Paoli," he said, when he perceived me at the frontier, where, according to custom, I had gone to meet him. " But this time I shall not cause you any great worry. I must go home, and I sha'n't stop in Paris for more than twenty-four hours—worse luck ! "

On the other hand, he wasted none of his time. Jumping into a motor-car the moment he was out of the train, he first drove to the Hôtel Bristol, where he remained just long enough to change his clothes, after which he managed, during his brief stay, to hear mass in the church of St. Roch, for it was Sunday, to pay a visit to M. Loubet, to make some purchases in the principal shops, to lunch with his aunt, the

Infanta Eulalie, to take a motor-drive, in the pouring rain, to Saint-Germain and back, to dine at the Spanish Embassy, and to wind up the evening at the Théâtre des Variétés.

" And it's like that every day, when he is travelling," said one of his suite.

The King, I may say, makes up for his daily expenditure of activity with a tremendous appetite. I have observed, for that matter, that the majority of sovereigns are valiant trenchermen. Every morning of his life, Alfonso XIII. has a good rumpsteak and potatoes for his first breakfast, often preceded by eggs and sometimes followed by salad and fruit. On the other hand, the King seldom drinks wine and generally confines himself to a tumbler of water and *zucharillos*, the national beverage, composed of white of egg, beaten up with sugar.

In spite of his continual need of movement, his passionate love of sport in all its forms and especially of motoring, his expansive, rather mad, but very attractive youthfulness, Alfonso XIII., even in his flying trips, never, as we have seen, loses the occasion of improving his mind. He is very quick at seizing a point, possesses a remarkable power of assimilation, and, though he does not read much, for he has not the gift of patience, he is remarkably well-informed as regards the smallest details that interest him. One day, for instance, he asked me, point-blank :

" Do you know how many gendarmes there are in France ? "

I confess that I was greatly puzzled what to reply, for I have never cared for statistics. I ventured, therefore, on the off-chance, to say :

"Ten thousand."

"Ten thousand ! Come, M. Paoli, what are you thinking of ? That's the number we have in Spain. It's more like twenty thousand."

This figure, as I afterwards learnt, was strictly accurate.

As for business of State, I also noticed that the King devoted more time to it than his restless life would lead one to believe. Rising, winter and summer, at six o'clock, he stays indoors and works regularly during the early portion of the morning and often again at night. In this connection, one of his ministers said to me :

"He never shows a sign of either weariness or boredom. The King's 'frivolity' is a popular fallacy. On the contrary, he is terribly painstaking. Just like the Queen Mother, he insists upon clear and detailed explanations, before signing the least document, and he knows quite well how to make his will felt. Besides, he is fond of work, and he can work no matter where : in a motor-car, in a boat, in the train, as well as in his study."

But it was especially on the occasion of the event which was to mark an indelible date in his life, a fair and happy date, that I had time to observe him and to learn to know him better. . . . The reader will have guessed that I am referring to his engagement. The duties which I fulfilled during a quarter of a century have sometimes involved difficult moments, delicate responsibilities, thankless tasks, but they have also procured me many charming compensations; and I have no more delightful recollection than that of witnessing, at first hand, that fresh and touching royal idyll, that simple, cloudless romance, which began one fine evening in London, was continued under the sunny sky of the Basque coast, and ended by leading to one of those rare unions which satisfy the exigencies both of public policy and of the heart.

Like his father before him, Alfonso XIII., when his ministers began to hint discreetly about possible "alliances," contented himself with replying:

"I shall marry a princess who takes my fancy and nobody else. I intend to love my wife."

Nevertheless, diplomatic intrigues fashioned themselves around the young sovereign. The Emperor William would have liked to see a German princess share the throne of Spain; a marriage with an Austrian archduchess would have continued a time-honoured tradition; the question of a French princess was also mooted, I believe. . . . But the political *rapprochement* between Spain and England had just been accomplished under French auspices; an Anglo-Spanish marriage seemed to correspond with the interests of Spain; and it so happened that the Princess Patricia of Connaught had lately been seen in Andalusia. Her name was on all men's lips;

already, in the silence of the palace, official circles were preparing for this union. Only one detail had been omitted, but it was a detail of the first importance : that of consulting the two persons directly interested, who did not even know each other.

When the King went to England, no one thought for a moment but that he would return engaged . . . and engaged to Patricia of Connaught. The diplomatists, however, had reckoned without a factor which was doubtless foreign to them, but which was all-powerful in the eyes of Alfonso XIII. : the little factor known as love.

As a matter of fact, when the two young people met, they did not attract each other. On the other hand, at the ball given in the King's honour at Buckingham Palace, Alfonso never took his eyes off a young, fair-haired princess, whose radiant beauty shed all the glory of spring around her.

" Who is that ? " asked the King.

" Princess Ena of Battenberg," was the reply.

The two were presented, danced and talked together, met again on the next day and on the following days. And, when the King returned to Spain, he left his heart in England.

But he did not breathe a word about it. His little idyll, which took the form of an interchange of letters and postcards, as well as of secret negotiations with a view to marriage—negotiations conducted with the English royal family by the King in person—was pursued in the greatest mystery. People knew, of course, that the princess and the King liked and admired each other; but they knew nothing of the young monarch's private plans. Moreover, he took a pleasure in mystifying those about him: he, who had once been so expansive, now became suddenly contemplative and reserved.

Soon after his return, he ordered a yacht; and, when the time came to christen her, he made the builders paint on the bows, in gold letters:

"PRINCESS . . ."

The comments aroused by those three little dots may be easily imagined.

The moment, however, was at hand when the name of the royal yacht's godmother and, therefore, of the future Queen of Spain was to be revealed. One morning in January 1906, I received a letter from Miss Minnie Cochrane, Princess Henry of Battenberg's faithful lady-in-waiting, telling me that the princess and her daughter, Princess Ena, were leaving shortly for Biarritz, to stay with their cousin, the Princess Frederica of Hanover, and inviting me to accompany them. This kind thought is explained by the fact that I had known the princess and her daughter for many years: I had often had occasion to see Princess Beatrice with the late Queen Victoria, to whom she showed the most tender filial affection; I had also known Princess Ena as a little girl, when she still wore short frocks and long fair curls, and when she used to play with her dolls under the fondly-smiling gaze of her august grandmother. She was then a grave and reflective child; she had great, deep, expressive blue eyes; and she was a little shy, like her mother.

When, at Calais, I beheld a fresh and beautiful girl, unreserved and gay, a real fairy-princess, whose face, radiant with gladness, so evidently reflected a very sweet, secret happiness; when, on the day after her arrival at Biarritz, I unexpectedly saw King Alfonso arrive in a great state of excitement and surprised the first glance which they exchanged at the door of the villa . . . then I understood. Nor was I in the least astonished when Miss Cochrane, whom I had ventured to ask if it was true that there was a matrimonial project on foot between the King and the princess, answered, with a significant smile:

"I think so . . . it is not officially settled yet; it will be decided here."

4

The Villa Mouriscot, where the princesses were staying, was a picturesque Basque châlet, elegantly and comfortably furnished. Standing on a height, at two miles from Biarritz, whence the eye commanded the magnificent circle of hills, and buried in the midst of luxuriant and fragrant gardens, intersected by shady and silent walks, it formed an appropriately poetic setting for the romance of the royal betrothal.

The King came every day. Wrapped in a huge cloak, with a motoring-cap and goggles, he would arrive at ten o'clock in the morning, from San Sebastian, in his double Panhard phaeton, which he drove himself, except on the rare occasions when he entrusted the steering-wheel to his excellent French chauffeur, Antonin, who accompanied him on all his excursions. His friends the Marques de Viana, the young Conde de Villalobar, counsellor to the Spanish Embassy in London, Señor Quiñones de Leon, the charming attaché to the Paris embassy, the Conde del Grove, his faithful aide-de-camp, or the Marques de Pacheco, commanding the palace halberdiers, formed his usual suite. As soon as the car had passed through the gates and stopped before the door, where Baron von Pawel-Rammingen, the Princess Frederica's husband, and Colonel Lord William Cecil, the Princess Henry of Battenberg's comptroller, awaited him, the King hurried to the drawing-room, where the pretty princess sat looking out for his arrival, as impatient for the meeting as the King himself.

After the King had greeted his hosts at the villa, he and the princess walked into the gardens and exchanged much lively talk as they strolled about the paths in which, as Gounod's song says, "lovers lose their way." They returned in time for the family lunch, a very simple repast, to which the King's tremendous appetite did full honour. He used often to send for Fräulein Zinska, the Princess Frederica's old Hanoverian cook, and congratulate her on her culinary capacities, a proceeding which threw the good woman into an ecstasy of delight. After lunch, the young people, accompanied by Miss Cochrane as chaperon, went out in the motor, not returning until nearly dark. On rainy days, of course, there was no drive; but in the drawing-room of the villa the Princess Frederica had thoughtfully contrived a sort of "cosy corner," in which the engaged couple could pursue their discreet flirtation at their ease. When they took refuge there, young Prince Alexander of Battenberg, who had joined his family at Biarritz, used to tease them :

"Look out ! " he would cry to any one entering the room. "Be careful ! Don't disturb the lovers ! "

In the evening, at dinner, the suite were present. The King changed into evening-clothes, with the collar of the Golden Fleece. At half-past ten, he left for the station and returned to San Sebastian by the Sud-Express.

After a few days, although the pair were not yet officially betrothed, no one doubted but that the event was near at hand.

"She's charming, isn't she ? " the King asked me, straight out.

A significant detail served to show me how far things had gone. One day, the two young people, accompanied by the Princesses Frederica and Beatrice and the whole little court, walked to the end of the grounds, to a spot, near the lake, where two holes had been newly dug. A gardener stood waiting for them, carrying two miniature fir-plants in his arms.

" This is mine," said the King.

" And this is mine," said the princess, in French, for they constantly spoke French together.

" We must plant the trees side by side," declared the King, " so that they may always remind us of these never-to-be-forgotten days."

No sooner said than done. In accordance with the old English custom, the two of them, each laying hold of a spade, dug up the earth and heaped it round the shrubs, with shouts of laughter that rang clear through the silent wood. Then, when the King, who, in spite of his strength of arm, is a poor gardener, perceived that the princess had finished her task first:

" There's no doubt about it," he said, " I am very awkward! I must put in a month or two with the sappers! "

On returning to the villa, he gave the princess her first present : a heart set in brilliants. It was certainly a day of symbols.

On the following day, things took a more definite turn. The King came to fetch the princesses in the morning to take them to San Sebastian, where they met Queen Maria Christina. Nobody knew what happened in the course of the interview and the subsequent private luncheon at the Miramar Palace. But it was, beyond a doubt, a decisive day. At Fuenterrabia, the first Spanish town through which they passed on their way to San Sebastian in the morning, the King said to the princess:

"You are now on Spanish soil."

"Oh," she said, "I am so glad!"

"It will soon be for good."

And they smiled to each other.

The frantic cheering that greeted Princess Ena's arrival at San Sebastian, the hail of flowers that fell at her feet as she passed through the streets, the motherly kiss with which she was received at the door of Queen Maria Christina's drawing-room, must have convinced her that all Spain had confirmed its sovereign's choice and applauded his good taste.

Twenty-four hours after this visit, the Queen Mother, in her turn, went to Biarritz and took tea at the Villa Mouriscot. The King had gone on before her. Intense happiness was reflected on every face. As the Queen stepped into her carriage, after graciously sending for me to thank me for the care which I was taking of her son, she said to the princess, with a smile:

"We shall soon see you in Madrid."

Then, taking a white rose from the bouquet with which the Mayor of Biarritz had presented her, she gave it to the princess, who pressed it to her lips before pinning it to her bodice.

That same evening, the King, beaming all over his face, cried to me from a distance, the moment that he saw me:

"It's all right, Paoli; the official demand has been granted. You see before you the happiest of men!"

The days that followed upon their betrothal were days of enchantment for the young couple, now freed from all preoccupation and constraint. One met them daily, motoring along the picturesque roads of the Basque country or walking through the streets of Biarritz, stopping before the shop-windows, at the photographer's or at the pastry-cook's.

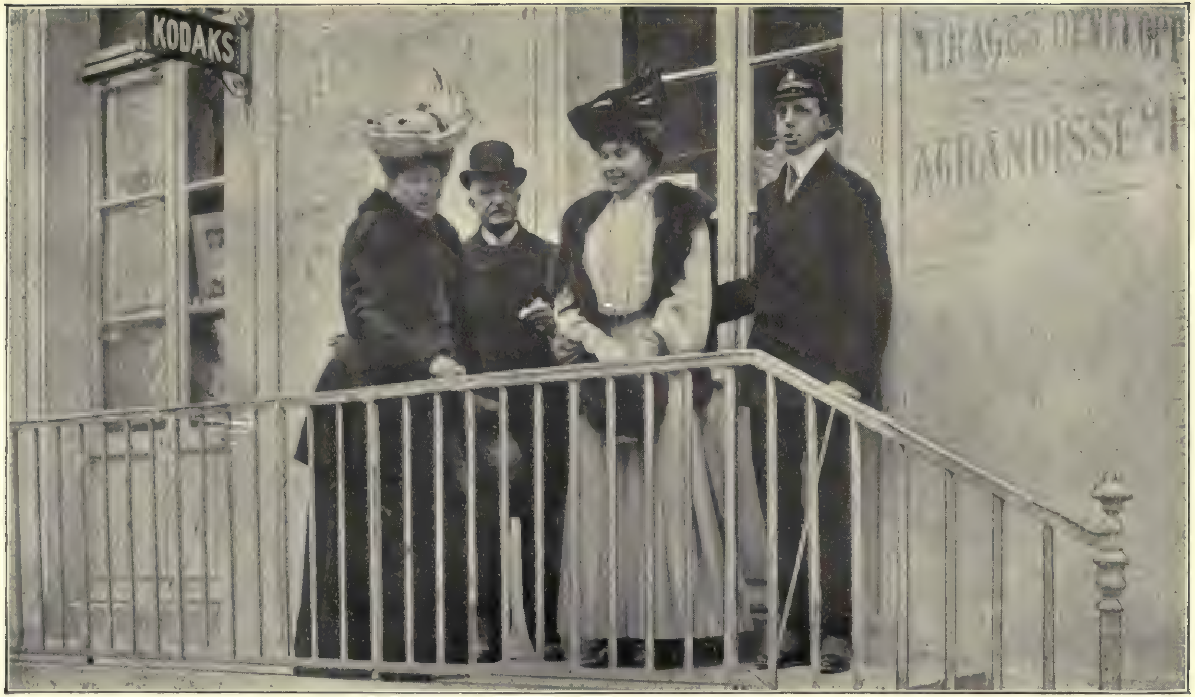
"Do you know, Paoli," said the King to me one day, "I've changed the princess's name? Instead of calling her Ena, which I don't like, I call her Nini. That's very Parisian, isn't it?"

The royal lover, as I have already said, prided himself with justice on his Parisianism.

It will readily be imagined that the protection of the King was not always an easy matter. True, it was understood that I should invariably be told beforehand of the programme of the day; but the plans would be changed an hour later; and, when the young couple had once set out at random, nothing was more difficult than to catch them up.

I remember one morning when the King informed me that he did not intend to go out that day. I thereupon determined to give myself a few hours' rest. I had returned to my hotel and was beginning to enjoy the unaccustomed sense of repose, when the telephone-bell rang:

"The King and the princess have gone out,"



THE KING AND QUEEN OF SPAIN, PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG, AND M. PAOLI.

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said the voice of one of my detectives. “It’s impossible to find them.”

Greatly alarmed, I was hurrying to the Villa Mouriscot, when, at a bend in the road, I saw the fugitives themselves before me, accompanied by Princess Beatrice.

“I say!” cried the King, in great glee. “We gave your inspector the slip!”

And, as I was venturing to utter a discreet reproach:

“Don’t be angry with us, M. Paoli,” the princess broke in, very prettily. “The King isn’t frightened; no more am I. Who would think of hurting us?”

The great delight of Alfonso, who is very playfully inclined, was to hoax people that did not know who he was. One day, motoring into Cambo, the delicious village near which M. Edmond Rostand’s property lies, he entered the post-office to send off some cards. Seeing the woman in charge of the office taking the air outside the door:

“I beg your pardon, madame,” he said, very politely. “Could you tell me if the King of Spain is expected here to-day?”

“I don’t know anything about it,” said the little post-mistress, in an off-hand manner.

“Don’t you know him by sight?”

“No.”

“Oh, really! They say he’s very nice: not exactly handsome, but quite charming, for all that.”

The good lady, of course, suspected nothing; but, when the King handed her his postcards, it goes without saying that she at once read the superscriptions and saw that they were addressed to the Queen Mother at San Sebastian, to the Infanta Doña Paz, to the Infanta Maria Teresa, to the prime minister:

"Why, it's the King himself!" she exclaimed, quite overcome.

Alfonso XIII. was already far on his road.

The most amusing adventure, however, was that which he had at Dax. One morning, he took it into his head to motor to the parched and desolate country of the Landes, which stretch from Bayonne to Bordeaux. After a long and wearing drive, he decided to take the train back from Dax. Accompanied by his friend Señor Quiñones de Leon, he made for the station, where the two young men, tired out and streaming with perspiration, sat down in the refreshment-room.

"Give us some lunch, please," said the King, who was ravenously hungry, to the lady at the bar.

The refreshment-room, unfortunately, was very scantily supplied. When the two travelling-companions had eaten up the sorry fare represented by a few eggs and sandwiches, which had probably been waiting more than a month for a traveller to arrive and take a fancy to them, the King, whose appetite was far from being satisfied, called the barmaid, a fat and matronly Béarnaise, with an upper lip adorned with a pair of thick mustachios.

" Have you nothing else to give us ? " he asked.

" I have a *pâté de foie gras,* but . . . it's very expensive," said the decent creature, whose perspicacity did not go to the length of seeing a serious customer in this famished and dusty young man.

" Never mind, let's have it," said the King.

The woman brought her *pâté,* which was none too fresh ; but how great was her amazement when she saw the two travellers devour not only the liver, but the fat as well ! The pot was emptied and scraped clean in the twinkling of an eye.

Pleased with her successful morning's trade and encouraged by the King's ebullient good-humour, the barmaid sat down at the royal table, began to tell the King her family affairs and questioned him with motherly solicitude. When, at last, the hour of departure struck, they shook hands with each other warmly.

Some time afterwards, the King was passing through Dax by rail and, as the train steamed into the station, said to me :

" I have an acquaintance at Dax. I'll show her to you : she is charming."

The buxom Béarnaise was there, more mustachioed than ever. I will not attempt to describe her comic bewilderment at recognizing her former customer in the person of the King. He was delighted and, giving her his hand :

" You won't refuse to say how-do-you-do to me, I hope ? " he asked, laughing.

The incident turned her head ; what was bound to happen happened : she became indiscreet. From that time onwards, she looked into every train that stopped at Dax, to see if " her friend " the King was among the passengers ; and, when, instead of stepping on the platform, he satisfied himself with giving her a friendly little nod from behind the pane, she felt immensely disappointed : in fact, she was even a little offended.

The Cambo post-mistress and the Dax barmaid are not the only people who can boast of having been taken in by Alfonso XIII. His waggery was sometimes let loose upon grave and serious men. . . . Dr. Moure, of Bordeaux, who attended the young monarch for his operation on the nose, has a story to tell. He was sent for, one day, to San Sebastian and was waiting for his illustrious patient in a room at the Miramar Palace, when the door opened quickly and there entered a most respectable lady, dressed in silk flounces and wearing a wig and spectacles. Not having the honour of her acquaintance, the doctor made a deep bow, to which she replied with a stately curtsy.

" It must be the *camerera-major*," he thought to himself. " She looks tremendously eighteenth-century."

But suddenly a great burst of laughter shook the venerable dowager's frame from head to foot, her spectacles fell from her nose, her wig dropped off likewise, and a clarion voice cried :

" Good-morning, doctor ! It's I ! "

It was the King.

The chapter of anecdotes is inexhaustible. And it is not difficult to picture how this playful simplicity, combined with a delicacy of feeling and a knightly grace, to which, in our age of brutal realism, we are no longer accustomed, made an utter conquest of the pretty English princess. When, after several days of familiar and daily intimacy, it became necessary to say good-bye—the princess was returning to England to busy herself with preparations for her marriage, Alfonso to Madrid for the same reason—when the moment of separation had come, there was a pang at the heart on both sides. And, as I was leaving with the princess for Paris :

" You're a lucky man, M. Paoli, to be going with the princess," said the King, sadly, as I stepped into the railway-carriage. " I'd give anything to be in your place ! "

5

While the court of Spain was employed in settling, down to the smallest particular, the ceremonial for the King's approaching wedding, Princess Ena was absorbed, at one and the same time, in the charming details of her trousseau and in the more austere preparations for her conversion to Catholicism. This conversion, as I have already said, was a *sine qua non* to the consent of Spain to her marriage.

The princess and her mother, accompanied by Miss Cochrane and Lord William Cecil, went and stayed at an hotel at Versailles for the period of religious instruction which precedes the admission of a neophyte within the pale of the Roman Church; and it was at Versailles, on a cold February morning, that she abjured her Protestantism in one of the smaller chapels of the cathedral.

The last months of the winter of 1906 were spent by the engaged pair in eager expectation of the great event that was to unite them for good and in the manifold occupations which this event involved. The date of the wedding was fixed for the 31st of May. A few days before that, I went to Calais to meet the princess. It was as though Nature, in her charming vernal awakening, was smiling upon the royal bride and had hastily decked herself in her best to greet the young princess. But the princess saw nothing: she had bidden a last farewell to her country, her family, and her home; and, despite the happiness that called her, the fond memory of all that she was quitting oppressed her heart.

"It is nothing, M. Paoli," she said, when I asked the cause of her sadness, "it is nothing; I cannot help feeling a little touched when I think that I am leaving the country where I have spent so many happy years to go towards the unknown."

She did not sleep that night. . . . At three o'clock in the morning, she was up and dressed, ready to appear before her future husband, before the nation that was waiting to welcome her, while the King, at the same hour, was striding up and down the platform at Irun, in a fever of excitement, peering into the night so as to be the first to see the yellow gleams of the train and nervously lighting cigarette upon cigarette to calm his impatience.

Then came the whirlwind of festivals, at which the King invited me to be present; the sumptuous magnificence of the marriage ceremony in the ancient church of Los Geronimos. . . . It was as though the old court of Spain had regained its pomp of the days of long ago. Once more, the streets, all dressed with flags, were filled with antiquated chariots, with heraldic costumes, with glittering uniforms; from the balconies, draped with precious stuffs, flowers fell in torrents; cheers rose from the serried ranks of the crowd; an intense, noisy, mad gaiety reigned in all men's eyes, on all men's lips, while, from behind the windows of the state-coach that carried her to the church, the surprised and delighted princess, forgetting her fleeting melancholy, now smiled her acknowledgments of this mighty welcome.

A tragic incident was fated brutally to interrupt her fair young dream.

Finding no seat in the church of Los Geronimos, the dimensions of which are quite small, I took refuge in one of the Court stands erected along the route taken by the sovereigns; and I was watching the procession pass, on its return to the palace, when my ears were suddenly deafened by a tremendous explosion. . . . At first no one realized where it came from . . . we thought that it was the report of a cannon-shot fired to announce the end of the ceremony. . . . But suddenly loud yells arose, people hustled one another and rushed away madly, shouting:

"It's murder! It's murder! The King and Queen are killed!"

Terrified, I tried to hasten to the street from which the cries came. A file of soldiers, drawn up across the roadway, stopped me. I then ran to the palace, where I arrived at exactly the same moment as the royal coach, from which the King and the young Queen alighted. They were pale, but calm. The King held his wife's hand tenderly in his own and stared in dismay at the long white train of her bridal dress, stained with great splashes of blood. Filled with horror, I went up to Alfonso XIII.:

"Oh, Sir," I cried, "at least, both of you are safe and sound!"

"Yes," he replied. Then, lowering his voice, he added, "But there are some killed. Poor people! . . . What an infamous thing!"

Under her great white veil, the Queen, standing between Queen Maria Christina and the Princess

Henry of Battenberg, still both trembling, wept silent tears. Then the King, profoundly moved, drew nearer to her and kissed her slowly on the cheek, whispering these charming words:

"I do hope that you are not angry with me for the emotion which I have all involuntarily caused you?"

What she replied I did not hear: I only saw a kiss.

Notwithstanding the warm manifestations of loyalty which the people of Spain lavished upon their sovereigns on the following day, Queen Victoria is said to have been long haunted by the horrible spectacle which she had beheld and to have retained an intense feeling of terror and sadness arising from that tragic hour. But, God be praised, everything passes. . . . When, later, I had the honour of again finding myself in attendance upon the King and Queen, at Biarritz and in Paris, I recognized once more the happy and loving young couple whom I had known at the time of their engagement. Alfonso XIII. had the same gaiety, the same high spirits as before; and the Queen's mind seemed to show no trace of painful memories.

In the course of the first journey which I took with them, a year after the murderous attempt in Madrid, the King himself acquainted me with the real cause of this happy equanimity so promptly recovered. Walking into the compartment where I was sitting, he lifted high into the air a pink and chubby child and, holding it up for me to look at, said, with more than a touch of pride in his voice :

" There ! What do you think of him ? Isn't he splendid ? "

CHAPTER III

THE SHAH OF PERSIA

1

Must I confess it? When I heard, a few weeks before the opening of the International Exhibition of 1900, that I was to have the honour of being attached to the person of Muzaffr-ed-Din, King of Kings and Shah of Persia, during the whole length of the official visit which he contemplated paying to Paris, I did not welcome the news with the alacrity which it ought perhaps to have provoked.

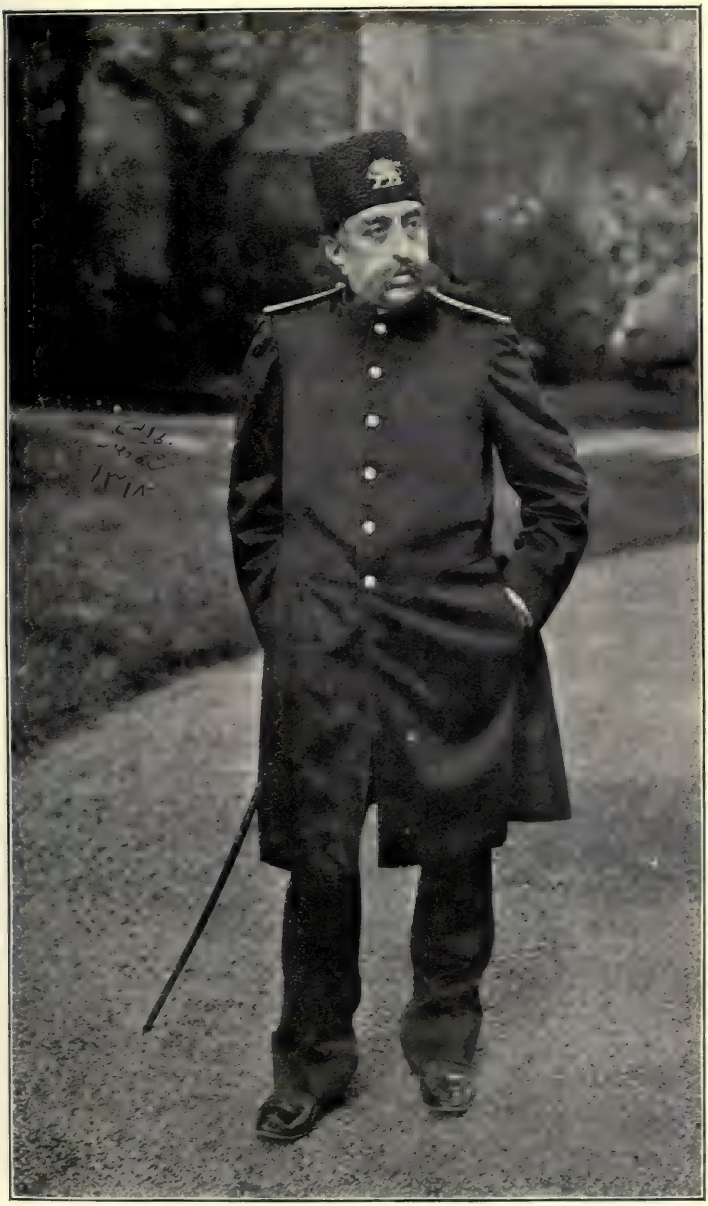
And yet I had no reason to be prejudiced against this monarch: I did not even know him. My apprehensions were grounded on more remote causes: I recalled the memories which a former Shah, his predecessor, had left among us. Nasr-ed-Din was a strange and capricious sovereign, who had never succeeded in making up his mind, when he came to Europe, to leave the manners and customs of his native land behind him or to lay aside the troublesome fancies in which his reckless despotism delighted to indulge. Was it not related of him that, while staying in the country, in France, he caused a sheep or two to be sacrificed every morning in his bedroom, in order to ensure the prophet's clemency until the evening; and that he had the amiable habit of buying anything that took his fancy, but neglecting to pay the bill?

Lastly, this very delicious story was told about him. The Shah had asked whether he could not, by way of amusement, be present at an execution of capital punishment during one of his stays in Paris. It so happened that an occasion offered. He was invited to go, one morning, to the Place de la Roquette, where the scaffold had been erected. He arrived with his diamonds and his suite; but, the moment he saw the condemned man, his generous heart was filled with a sudden tenderness for the murderer:

"Not that one . . . the other!" he ordered, pointing to the public prosecutor, who was presiding over the ceremony.

Picture the magistrate's face, while the Shah insisted and thought it discourteous of them not at once to yield to his wishes.

I asked myself, therefore, with a certain dismay what unpleasant surprises his successor might have in store for me. He seemed to me to come from the depths of a very old and mysterious form of humanity, travelling from his capital to the shores of Europe, slowly, by easy stages, as in the mediæval times, across deserts and mountains and blue-domed cities of the dead, escorted by a fabulous baggage-train of rare stuffs, of praying-carpets, of marvellous jewels, an army of



MUZAFFR-ED-DIN, SHAH OF PERSIA.

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turbaned horsemen, a swarm of officials, a harem of dancing girls and a long file of camels.

I asked myself whether I, too, should be obliged to assist at sacrifices of heifers and to console unpaid tradesmen, only to end by being pointed out by His Majesty as a " substitute " under the knife of the guillotine.

However, I was needlessly alarmed : in Persia, thank goodness, the Shahs succeed, but do not resemble one another. I became fully aware of this when I was admitted into the intimacy of our new guest. Muzaffr-ed-Din had nothing in common with his father. He was an overgrown child, whose massive stature, great bushy moustache, very kind, round eyes, prominent stomach and general adiposity formed a contrast with his backward mental condition and his sleepy intelligence. He had, in fact, the brain of a twelve-year-old schoolboy, together with a schoolboy's easily-aroused astonishment, candour and curiosity. He busied himself exclusively with small things, the only things that excited and interested him. He was gentle, good-natured, an arrant coward, open-handed at times and extremely capricious; but his whims never went so far as to take pleasure in the suffering of others. He loved life, was enormously attached to it, in fact; and he liked me, too, with a real affection, which was spontaneous and, at times, touching :

" Paoli, worthy Paoli," he said to me one day, in an expansive mood, fixing his round pupils upon me, " you . . . my good, my dear domestic ! "

When I appeared surprised and even a little offended at the place which he was allotting me in the social scale :

" His Majesty means to say," explained the grand vizier, " that he looks upon you as belonging to the family. 'Domestic' in his mind means a friend of the house, according to the true etymology of the word, which is derived from the Latin *domus*."

The intention was pretty enough; I asked no more, remembering that Muzaffr-ed-Din spoke French with difficulty and employed a sort of nigger jargon to express his thoughts.

2

At the time of his first stay in Paris, he had the privilege of inaugurating the famous Sovereigns' Palace, which the government had fitted up in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne for the entertainment of its royal visitors. The house was a comparatively small one; on the other hand, it was sumptuously decorated. The national furniture-repository had sent some of the finest pieces to be found in its historic store-rooms. In fact, I believe that the Shah slept in the bed of Napoleon I. and washed his hands and face in the Empress Marie-Louise's basin : things that interested him but little. Great memories were a matter of indifference to him; he infinitely preferred futile realities in the form of useless objects, whose glitter pleased his eye, and of more or less harmonious sounds, whose vibrations tickled his ears.

His taste in such matters was proved on the day of his arrival, by two immediate decisions: he ordered the grand piano which adorned his drawing-room to be packed up for Teheran, together with the motor-car which awaited his good pleasure outside, after hearing the one, trying the other, and lavishly paying for both. He would not be denied.

His amazement was great when he visited the exhibition for the first time. The wonderful cosmopolitan city that seemed to have leapt into existence in the space of one of the thousand and one nights of the Persian legend stirred his eastern imagination, strive though he might to conceal the fact. The splendour of the exotic display exercised an irresistible attraction upon him; the glass-cases of jewellery also fascinated his gaze, although he himself, doubtless without realizing it, was a perambulating shop-window which any jeweller would have hankered to possess. On his long Persian tunic, with its red border and its wide, pleated skirt, he wore a regular display of precious stones; and one did not know which to admire most: the gleaming sapphires that adorned his shoulder-straps, the splendid emeralds, the exquisite turquoises that studded the baldrick and the gold scabbard of his sword, the four enormous rubies that took the place of buttons on his uniform, or the dazzling and formidable diamond, the famous Daria-Nour, or Sea of Light, fastened to his *khola*, the traditional head-dress, whence a quivering aigrette in brilliants sprang like a fountain of light. Thus decked out, Muzaffr-ed-Din was valued at thirty-four million francs net; and, even then, he was far from carrying the whole of his fortune upon his person: I have in fact been assured that, in the depths of the iron trunk of which four vigilant Persians had the keeping, there slumbered as many precious stones again, no less fine than the others and content to undergo the rigour of a temporary disgrace. At all events, in the guise in which he showed himself in public, he was enough to excite the admiring curiosity of the crowd.

In his solemn walks through the various sections of the exhibition, where my modest frock-coat looked drab and out of place among the glittering uniforms, he was attended by the grand vizier, the only dignitary entitled, by the etiquette of the Persian court, to carry a cane in the presence of his sovereign, who himself always leant upon a stick made of some precious wood. Nothing could damp his eagerness to know, to see, and to buy things. He bought everything indifferently: musical instruments, old tapestries, a set of table-cutlery, a panorama, a "new art" ring, a case of pistols. He looked, touched, weighed the thing in his hand and then, raising his forefinger, said, "*Je prends*," while the delighted exhibitor, greatly touched and impressed, took down the order and the address.

Nevertheless, Muzaffr-ed-Din was not so rich as one would be inclined to think. Each time, in fact, that he came to Europe, where he spent fabulous sums, he procured the money needed for his journey, not only by raising a loan, generally in Russia, but also by a method which was both ingenious and businesslike. Before leaving his possessions, he summoned his chief officers of State — ministers, provincial governors and the like—and proposed the following bargain to them : those who wished to form part of his suite must first pay him a sum of money which he valued in accordance with the importance of their functions. It varied between 50,000 and 300,000 francs. In return, he authorized them to recoup themselves for this advance in any way they pleased. Here we find the explanation of the large number of persons who accompanied the Shah on his travels and the quaint and unexpected titles which they bore, such as that of "minister of the dock-yard," though Persia has never owned a navy, and one still more extraordinary, that of "attorney-general to the heir-apparent." Although these gentry sometimes had romantic souls, they invariably possessed terribly practical minds. Eager to recover as quickly as possible the outlay to which their ambition to behold the west had induced them to consent, they practised on a huge scale and without scruple or hesitation what I may describe as the bonus or commission system. Notwithstanding my long experience of human frailties, I confess that this proceeding, cynically raised to the level of an institution, upset all my notions, while it explained how the Shah was able to spend eight to twelve million francs in pocket-money on each of his trips to France.

As soon as the people about him knew what shops His Majesty proposed to visit in the course of his daily drives, a bevy of courtiers would swoop down upon each awestruck tradesman and imperiously insist upon his promising them a big commission, in exchange for which they undertook to prevail upon His Majesty graciously to honour the establishment with his custom. The shopkeeper, as a rule, raised no objection: he was quite content to increase the price in proportion; and, when the good Shah, accompanied by his vizier, presented himself a few hours later in the shop, his suite praised the goods of the house so heartily that he never failed to let fall the time-honoured phrase, "*Je prends*," so as to give no one even the slightest pain or trouble. Nor, for that matter, did any of those round him dream of making a secret of the traffic in which they indulged behind their sovereign's back: it was a right duly acquired and paid for.

I am bound to say, however, that the grand vizier—no doubt because he was already too well-off—appeared to be above these sordid and venal considerations. This important personage, whose name on the occasion in question was His Highness the Sadrazani Mirza Ali Asghar Khan

Emin es Sultan, combined an acute understanding with a superior cast of mind; the Shah showed him the greatest affection and treated him as a friend. These marks of special kindness were due to curious causes, which an amiable Persian was good enough to reveal to me. It appears that, when the late Shah Nasr-ed-Din was shot dead at the mosque where he was making a pilgrimage, the grand vizier of the time, who was none other than this same Mirza Ali Asghar Khan, pretended that the Shah's wound was not serious, had the corpse seated in the carriage and drove back to the palace beside it, acting as if he were talking to his sovereign, fanning him and asking at intervals for water to quench his thirst, as though he were still alive.

The death was not acknowledged till some days later. In this way, the vizier gave the heir-apparent, the present Shah, time to return from Tauris and avoided the grave troubles that would certainly have arisen had the truth been known. Muzaffr-ed-Din owed his crown and perhaps his life to his grand vizier: small wonder that he showed him some gratitude.

His court minister, Mohamed Khan, could also have laid claim to this gratitude, for he gave proof of remarkable presence of mind at the time of the attempted assassination of Muzaffr-ed-Din during his stay in Paris in 1900.

The incident is perhaps still in the reader's recollection. The Shah, with the court minister seated by his side, and General Parent, the chief French officer attached to his person, facing him, had just left the Sovereigns' Palace to drive to the exhibition, when a man sprang on the step of the open landau, drew a revolver and took aim at the monarch's chest. Before he had time, however, to pull the trigger, a hand of iron fell upon his wrist and clutched it with such force that the man was compelled to drop his weapon, which fell at the feet of the sovereign, while the would-be murderer was arrested by the police. Mohamed Khan, by this opportune and energetic interference, had prevented a shot the consequences of which would have been disastrous for the Shah and very annoying for the French government, all the more inasmuch as the author of this attempt was a French subject, a sort of fanatic from the south, to whom the recent assassination of King Humbert of Italy had suggested this fantastic plan of making away with the unoffending Muzaffr-ed-Din.

Here is a curious detail: I had that very morning received an anonymous letter, dated from Naples, but posted in Paris, in which the sovereign was warned that an attempt would be made on his life. Although this kind of communication was a very frequent one, I ordered the supervision to be redoubled inside the palace; as a matter of fact, I did not much fear a surprise outside, as the Shah never drove out but his carriage was surrounded by a detachment of cavalry. Now ill-luck would have it that he took it into his head, that day, to go out before the time which he himself had fixed and without waiting for the arrival of the escort : I have shown the result.

During the whole of this tragic scene, which lasted only a few seconds, he did not utter a single word; the pallor which overspread his cheeks alone betrayed his emotion : nevertheless, he ordered the coachman to drive on. When, at last, they reached the Champs Élysées and he perceived numerous groups waiting to cheer him, he emerged from his stupor :

" Is it going to happen again ? " he cried, in accents of terror.

3

He was, in fact, given to easy and strange fits of alarm. He always carried a loaded pistol in his trousers-pocket, though he never used it. On one of his journeys in France, he even took it into his head to make a high court-official walk before him when he left the theatre, carrying a revolver pointed at the peaceable sightseers who had gathered to see him come out. As soon as I perceived this, I ran up to the threatening bodyguard :

" Put that revolver away," I said. " It's not the custom here."

But I had to insist pretty roughly before he consented to sheathe his weapon.

The Shah, for that matter, was no less distrustful of his own subjects; in fact I observed that, when the Persians were in his presence, they adopted a uniform attitude, which consisted in holding their hands crossed on their stomachs, no doubt as evidence of their harmless intentions.

For the rest, his " alarms " displayed themselves under the most diverse aspects and in the most unexpected circumstances. For instance, there was no persuading him ever to ascend the Eiffel Tower. The disappointment of his guides was increased by the fact that he would come as far as the foot of the pillars; they always thought that he meant to go up. But no: once below the immense iron framework, he gazed up in the air, examined the lifts, flung a timid glance at the staircase, then suddenly turned on his heels and walked away. They told him in vain that his august father had ascended as far as the first floor; nothing could induce him to do as much.

Again, I remember a day—it was at the time of his second stay in Paris—when, on entering his drawing-room, I found him wearing a very careworn air.

" Paoli," he said, taking my hand and leading me to the window, " look ! "

Look as I might, I saw nothing out of the way. Down below, three bricklayers stood on the pavement, talking quietly together.

" What ! " said the Shah. " Don't you see those men standing still, down there ? They have been there for an hour, talking and watching my window. Paoli, they want to kill me!"

Repressing a strong desire to laugh, I resolved to reassure our guest with a lie:

"Why, I know them!" I replied. "I know their names: they are decent working-men."

Muzaffr-ed-Din's face lit up at once:

"You seem to know everybody," he said, giving me a grateful look.

The most amusing incident was that which happened on the occasion of an experiment with radium. I had described to the sovereign, in the course of conversation, the wonderful discovery which our great *savant*, M. Curie, had just made, a discovery that was likely to revolutionize science. The Shah was extremely interested in my story and repeatedly expressed a desire to be shown the precious magic stone. Professor Curie was informed accordingly and, in spite of his stress of work, agreed to come to the Élysée Palace Hotel and give an exhibition. As, however, complete darkness was needed for radium to be admired in all its brilliancy, I had with endless trouble persuaded the King of Kings to come down to one of the hotel cellars arranged for the purpose. At the appointed time, His Majesty and all his suite proceeded to the underground apartment in question. Professor Curie closed the door, switched off the electric light and uncovered his specimen of radium, when suddenly a shout of terror, resembling at one and the same time the roar of a bull and the yell of a man who is being murdered, rang out, followed by hundreds of similar cries. . . . Amid general excitement and consternation, we flung ourselves upon the electric switches, turned on the lights and beheld a strange sight: in the midst of the prostrate Persians stood the Shah, his arms clinging to the neck of his howling grand vizier, his round pupils dilated to their rims, while he shouted, at the top of his voice, in Persian:

"Come away! Come away!"

The switching on of the light calmed this mad anguish as though by magic. Realizing the disappointment which he had caused M. Curie, he tried to offer him a decoration by way of compensation; but the austere man of science thought fit to decline it.

The instinctive dread of darkness and solitude was so keen in the Persian monarch that he required his bedroom to be filled during the night with light and sound. Accordingly, every evening, as soon as he had lain down and closed his eyes, the members of his suite gathered round his bed, lit all the candles and exchanged their impressions aloud, while young nobles of the court, relieving one another in pairs, conscientiously patted his arms and legs with little light, sharp, regular taps. The King of Kings imagined that he was in this way keeping death at a distance, if perchance it should take a fancy to visit him in his sleep . . . and the extraordinary thing is that he did sleep, notwithstanding all this massage, light and noise.

4

The need which he felt of having people constantly around him, and of reproducing the atmosphere of his distant country wherever he fixed his temporary residence, was reflected in the picturesque and singularly animated aspect which the hotel or palace at which he elected to stay assumed soon after his installation. It was promptly transformed into a vast, exotic caravanserai, presenting the appearance of a French fair combined with that of an eastern bazaar. The house was taken possession of by its new occupants from the kitchens, ruled over by the Persian master-cook, who prepared the monarch's dishes, to the attics, where the lower servants were accommodated. One saw nothing but figures in dark tunics and astrakhan caps, squatting in the passages and leaning over the staircases; along the corridors and in the halls, the shopkeepers had improvised stalls as at Teheran, in the hope that the monarch would let fall from his august lips in passing the "*Je prends*" that promised wealth. . . . In the uncouth crowd which the desire of provoking and hearing that blissful phrase attracted to the waiting-rooms of the hotel, all the professions rubbed shoulders promiscuously: curiosity-dealers, unsuccessful inventors, collectors of autographs and postage-stamps, ruined financiers, charlatans, unknown artists.

Their numbers had increased so greatly, on the faith of the legend that the Shah's treasures were inexhaustible, that a radical step had to be taken : when Muzaffr-ed-Din returned to Paris in 1902 and 1905, the applicants for favours were forbidden to resume their little manœuvre. Thereupon they changed their tactics : they sat down and wrote.

I have kept these letters, which the Shah never read and which his secretary handed me regularly without having read them either. They arrived by each post in shoals. One could easily make a volume of them which would provide psychologists with a very curious study of the human soul and mind. Among those poor letters are many obscure, touching, comic, candid and cynical specimens; some also are absurd; others imprudent or sad. Most of them are signed; and among the signatures of these requests for assistance are names which one is surprised to find there. . . . I must be permitted to suppress these names and limit myself, in this mad orgy of epistolary literature, to reproducing the most typical of the letters that fell under my eyes.

First, a few specimens of the " comic " note :

" *To His Majesty Muzaffr-ed-Din, Shah of Persia.*

" Your Majesty,

" Knowing that you look kindly upon French requests, I venture to address these few lines to you. I am expecting my sister, Mlle.

Grampel, who has a situation in Russia; as she is ill, I would like her to remain in France. For us to live together, I should have to start a business with a capital of 3,000 to 5,000 francs, which I do not possess and which I cannot possibly find. I am 58 years of age.

" In the hope that you will lend a favourable ear to my request, I am,

" Your Majesty's most humble servant,

" MADAME M.

" P.S.—In gratitude, with Your Majesty's permission, I would place a sign representing Your Majesty over the shop-front."

" SIRE,

" The feeling that prompts me to write to you, O noble King, is the love which I feel for your country. I will come straight to the point: I will ask you, O Majesty, if I, a plain French subject, may have a post of some kind in your ideal kingdom.

" Dentist I am; a dentist I would remain, in Your Majesty's service. All my life long, you would be assured of my complete devotion.

" A future Persian dentist to his future king.

" P. J. L.

" Pray, Sire, address the reply to the *poste restante* at Post-office No. 54."

" GREAT SHAH,

" This missive which I have the honour

of addressing to Your Majesty is to tell you that I and my friends Messieurs Jules Brunel and Abel Chenet have the honour of offering you four bottles of champagne and two bottles of claret.

"In exchange, may we beg for the Order of the Sun and Lion, which it would give us great pleasure to receive and which we hope that Your Majesty will confer upon us? We are French citizens and old soldiers.

"We wish you constant good health and prosperity for your country, Persia. You can send your servant to fetch the bottles.

"We have the honour to greet you, and we remain your very humble servants, crying:

"'Long live H.M. Muzaffr-ed-Din and long live Persia!'

"A. W."

THORIGNY (*on my way home*), 27 *August*, 1902.

"YOUR MAJESTY,

"Yesterday, Tuesday, I was in Paris, waiting to have the pleasure of seeing you leave your hotel. That pleasure was not vouchsafed me.

"But, on the other hand, a ring set with a diamond, which I was taking to be repaired, was stolen from me by a pickpocket.

"This ring was the only diamond which my wife possessed. In consequence of the theft, she now possesses none.

"I put myself the question whether I could not indict you before a French court, as being the direct cause of the theft.

"I find nothing in our French law-books likely to decide in my favour.

"And so I prefer to come and beseech you to redress the involuntary injury which you have done me.

"A choice stone, which I should have set as a ring, would make good all the damage which I have suffered.

"I am well aware that you must have numerous and various requests for assistance. This is not one of them.

"But I should be infinitely grateful to you if you would understand that, but for your coming to Paris, I should not have been robbed, and if you would kindly send me a choice stone to replace the one stolen from me.

"Will Your Majesty pray receive the homage of my most profound respect?

"G. P.,
"*attorney-at-law*,
"BARBEZIEUX (*Gironde*), *France*."

"*To His Majesty Muzaffr-ed-Din, Shah of Persia, Élysée Palace Hotel, Paris.*

"I eagerly congratulate His Majesty on the great honour which he has paid the French people by making a long stay in the great international city. And I take advantage of this occasion to beg His Majesty to initiate a general convocation of all the sovereigns of the whole world for next month, in order to open a subscription list for the construction of an unprecedented fairy-palace (new style and copying some of its details from planetary nature and its marvels), to be known as the Sovereign Palace of the Universal Social Congress, symbolizing the whole universe by States, containing the apartments of every sovereign in the world, and situated near the Bois de Boulogne.

" I consider that His Majesty would thus have a good opportunity of securing a great page in history.

" Hoping for a just appreciation and entire success, I send His Majesty the Shah of Persia, the assurance of my greatest respect, together with my perfect consideration, and I am

" the most humble Architect-general of the Universal Confederation of Social Peace,

" at His Majesty's service,

" C. M."

Now comes the " touching " note :

" A little provincial work-girl, who has not the honour of being known to His Majesty, kneels down before him and, with her hands folded, entreats him to make her a present of a sum of 1,200 francs, which would enable her to marry the young man she loves. . . . Oh, what blessings he would receive, day after day, for that kind action !

" I beg the Shah to forgive me for any offence that this letter may commit against etiquette, with which I am not acquainted. I kiss His Majesty's hands and I am

"his most humble and obedient little servant,

"A. C."

Lastly, is not the following letter an exquisitely candid specimen of the proper art of "sponging"?

"YOUR MAJESTY,

"As you are a friend of France, I propose to write to you as a friend; you will permit me to do so, I hope.

"The question is this: I have the greatest longing to set eyes on the sea; my husband has a few days' holiday in the course of October; I should like to make the most of it and to go away for a little while.

"Our means are very small indeed: my husband has only 105 francs a month; and I could not do what I wish without encroaching on my housekeeping-money, which is calculated down to the last centime.

"I therefore remembered your generosity and thought that you might be touched by my request.

"You would not like a little Paris woman to be prevented from enjoying the sight of the sea, which you have doubtless often admired.

"You are very fond of travelling; you will understand my curiosity.

"Will Your Majesty deign to accept the expression of my most respectful and distinguished sentiments?

"MME. A. A."

A worthy woman sent this note :

"*To His Majesty the King of Persia.*

"My name is the Widow Bressoy, aged 82. I have lost my husband and two of my daughters, I am unable to walk and I owe a quarter's rent. My grandmother washed for His Majesty King Louis-Philippe of France; H.R.H. the Duc d'Aumale used to help me with my rent; show your kind heart and do as he did. Should you come to the church of Ste. Élisabeth du Temple on Sunday next, I should be very glad to see you.

"I am

"Your Majesty's most respectful servant,

"Widow BRESSOY."

The following original proposal came from a well-known business-house :

"SIR,

"After the Monza crime and the attempt of which you were the object yesterday, and in view of the solemnities during which you might be too much exposed to danger, I consider it my duty to bring to your notice certain particulars which might be of the greatest use to you and those about your person.

"I refer to secret waistcoats of my own manufacture, which I am able to offer to you and which are absolutely warranted.

"The waistcoat which I am offering is proof against a revolver-bullet and, of course, against a sword or dagger.

"As an absolute guarantee, I can assure you as follows by experiment: the fabric consists of a very close and solidly-riveted coat of steel mail; the shape of the links has been specially studied so as to allow of great suppleness, while preserving the greatest solidity.

"It resists the 12 *mm.* bullet of the regulation revolver, 1874 pattern.

"I have specimens at which bullets were fired at a distance of four yards; they give an exact idea of the resisting-power.

"The coat of mail is covered with silk or satin, which gives the appearance of an ordinary garment and does not for a moment suggest its special object.

"The waistcoat protects the back, the chest, the stomach and is continued down to the abdomen.

"I must add that the waistcoat is very easy to wear and in no way inconvenient, on condition that I be supplied with the necessary measurements or, better still, with an ordinary day-waistcoat of the wearer's, fitted to his size.

"Hoping in the circumstances to be of some use to you, I beg Your Majesty to accept the expression of my most profound respect.

"R. G."

Let us pass to the children. Less unreasonable than their parents, they content themselves with asking for postage-stamps, bicycles or autographs.

First comes a public schoolboy, quite proud of incidentally showing that he knows his classics :

"SIRE,

"When you first set foot on French soil, you were pleased to take notice, at Maubeuge railway-station, of a young public schoolboy, who, not knowing your quality, was only able to give you a very respectful greeting. That young schoolboy was myself.

"I realized the extent of the signal honour which Your Majesty did me, when I learnt that I had received it from the sovereign of Persia, the country of Xerxes and Darius, the land whose children have filled the world with the fame of their exploits. And, descending the course of the ages, reverting to the lessons of my masters, I hailed in you 'the wise and enlightened monarch whose reign holds forth so many hopes.'

"Sire, I shall never forget that moment, which will probably be the only one of its kind in my life; but, if I were permitted to express a wish, I would humbly confess to Your Majesty that my greatest happiness would be to possess a collection of Persian postage-stamps, as an official token of the honour which you condescended to do me.

"Deign, Sire, etc.
"R. W.,
"*pupil at the Lycée Faidherbe*, LILLE
"(*on my holidays*)."

The next has not yet learnt the beauties of literary style; he has less notions of form, but his ambition is more far-reaching :

"YOUR MAJESTY,

"I begin by begging your pardon for my presumption; but I have heard everybody say, and I read in the paper, that Your Majesty is greatly interested in motor-cars. I therefore thought that you must also have ridden the bicycle, which you now, no doubt, care less for; and it occurred to me that, if you happened to have an old one put by, Your Majesty might do me the honour to give it to me.

"Papa and my big brother Jean go out riding on their bicycles and I am left at home with mamma, because I have not a machine and they cannot afford to buy me one.

"I should be so proud to have a bicycle given me by Your Majesty.

"I shall not tell papa that I am writing to Your Majesty, because he would laugh at me, and I shall take three sous from my purse for the stamp on this letter.

"I pray God not to let those wicked anarchists attack Your Majesty, to whom I offer my profound respect.

"MAURICE LELANDAIS,
"*aged 9½ years,*
"*living with his family, Faubourg Bizienne,*
GUÉRANDE (*Loire-inférieure*)."

Another schoolboy :

"Verviers, 3 *September*.

"Great King of Persia in France,

"Sir,

"I have read in the paper that you are very rich and have lots of gold.

"My father promised to give me a gold watch for my first communion next year, if I worked hard at school.

"I did study, Sir, for I was second; and the first is thirteen years old; and I am only eleven and a half. To prove this to you, here is my prize-list. Now, when I ask if I shall have my watch, my father answers that he has no money and he wants it all for bread. It is not right, Sir, to deceive me like that. But I hope that you will give me what they refuse. Do me that great pleasure. I will pray for you.

"I love you very much.

"M. J."

Here is an artless request from a little English girl :

"Your Majesty,

"I hear that you are taking a holiday in Paris and I think that this must be the best time to write to you, for you will not be so busy as in your own kingdom.

"First of all, I want to tell you that I am an English girl, fourteen years of age, and my name is Mary. I love collecting autographs and so far I have been very lucky and have some of celebrities, but I have none of a king, except Menelik, who is a black majesty.

" Now, I should ever so much like to have a few lines in your handwriting.

" Do be so very kind as to write to me.

" MARY ST. J."

5

All these efforts of the imagination, all these prodigies of ingenuity were wasted. . . . As I have said, the Shah took no notice whatever of the six hundred and odd begging letters of different kinds addressed to him during his visits to France. Pleasure-loving and capricious, careful of his own peace of mind, he dreaded and avoided emotions of all kinds. . . . Nevertheless, he was not wholly insensible to pity nor indifferent to the charms of the fair sex. At certain times, he was capable of sudden movements of magnificent generosity: he would readily give a diamond to some humble workwoman whom he met on his way; he would, of his own accord, hand a bank-note to a beggar; he freely distributed Persian gold-pieces stamped with his effigy.

He would also fall a victim to sudden amatory fancies that sometimes caused me moments of cruel embarrassment. I remember that, one afternoon, when we were driving in the Bois de Boulogne, near the lakes, Muzaffr-ed-Din noticed a view which he admired, ordered the carriages to stop and expressed a desire to take some snapshots of the charming spot. We at once alighted. A little farther, a group of smart ladies sat engaged in animated conversation, without taking the smallest heed of our presence. The Shah, seeing them, asked me to beg them to come closer, so that he might photograph them. Although I did not know them, I went up and spoke to them and, with every apology, explained the sovereign's whim to them. Greatly amused, they consented with a good grace. The Shah took the photograph, smiled to the ladies and, when the operation was over, called me to him again :

" Paoli," he said, " they are very pretty, very nice; go and ask them if they would like to come back with me to Teheran."

Imagine my face! I had to employ all the resources of my eloquence to make the King of Kings understand that you cannot take a woman to Teheran as you would a piano, a cinematograph or a motor-car, and that you cannot say of her, as of an article in a shop, " *Je prends.*"

I doubt whether he really grasped the force of my arguments, for, some time after, when we were at the Opera, in the box of the President of the Republic, we perceived with dismay that His Persian Majesty, instead of watching the performance on the stage—consisting of that exquisite ballet *Coppélia,* with some of our prettiest dancers taking part in it—kept his opera-glass obstinately fixed on a member of the audience in the back row of the fourth tier, giving signs of manifest excitement as he did so. I was beginning to wonder with anxiety whether he had caught sight of some "suspicious face," when the court minister, in whose ear he had whispered a few words, came over to me and said, with an air of embarrassment :

"His Majesty feels a profound admiration for a lady up there . . . Do you see ? . . . The fourth seat from the right. . . . His Majesty would be obliged if you would enable him to make her acquaintance. . . . You can tell her, if you like, as an inducement, that my sovereign will invite her to go back with him to Teheran."

Again !

Although this sort of errand did not fall within the scope of my instructions, I regarded the worthy Oriental's idea as so comical that I asked one of my detectives, who, dressed to the nines, was keeping guard outside the presidential box, whether he would care to go upstairs and, if possible, convey the flattering invitation to the object of the imperial flame. My Don Juan by proxy assented and set out on his mission.

The Shah's impatience increased from moment to moment. The last act had begun, when I saw my inspector return alone and looking very sheepish :

"Well," I asked, "what did she say ?"

"She boxed my ears !"

The sovereign, when the grand vizier conveyed this grievous news to him, knitted his bushy eyebrows, declared that he was tired and ordered his carriage.

The days of Muzaffr-ed-Din were full of engagements. Rising very early in the morning, he devoted long hours to his toilet, to his prayers, and to his political conversations with the grand vizier. He worked as little as possible, but saw many people; he liked giving audiences to doctors and purveyors. He always had his meals alone, in accordance with Persian etiquette, and was served at one time with European dishes, which were better suited to his impaired digestive organs, and at another with Persian fare, consisting of slices of Ispahan melon, with white and flavoursome flesh; of the national dish called *pilaf tiobab*, in which meat, cut up and mixed with delicate spices, lay spread on a bed of rice just scalded, underdone and crisp; of hard-boiled eggs and young marrows; or else of *stilo* grill, represented by scallops of mutton soaked in aromatic vinegar and cooked over a slow fire of pinewood embers; lastly, of aubergine fritters, of which he was very fond. I am bound, for that matter, to say that Persian cooking, which I had many opportunities of tasting, is delicious and that the dishes which I have named would have done honour to any Parisian bill of fare.

After rising from table, Muzaffr-ed-Din generally devoted an hour to taking a nap, after which we went out either for a drive round

THE SHAH AND HIS SUITE LEAVING FOR A DRIVE.

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the Bois or to see the shops or the Paris sights. To tell the truth, we hardly ever knew beforehand what the sovereign's plans were. He seemed to take a mischievous delight in altering the afternoon programme and route which I had worked out, with his approval, in the morning. Thanks to his whims, I lived in a constant state of alarm.

"I want to see some museums to-day," he would say at eleven o'clock. "We will start at two."

I at once informed the minister of fine-arts, who told off his officials to receive him; I telephoned to the military governor of Paris to send an escort.

At three o'clock, we were still waiting. At last, just about four, he appeared, with a look of indifference and care on his face, and told me that he would much prefer to go for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne.

One day, after he had spent the morning in listening to a chapter of the life of Napoleon I., he beckoned to me on his way to lunch:

"M. Paoli," he said, "I want to go to the Château de Fontainebleau to-day."

"Well, Sir, you see . . ."

"Quick, quick!"

There was no arguing the matter. I rushed to the telephone, warned the panic-stricken P.L.M. Co. that we must have a special train at all costs, and informed the keeper of the palace and the dumbfoundered sub-prefect of our imminent arrival at Fontainebleau.

When the Shah, still under the influence of his morning's course of reading, stepped from the carriage, two hours later, before the gate of the palace, he was seized with a strange freak: he demanded that the dragoons who had formed his escort from the station should dismount and enter the famous Cour des Adieux after him. Next, he made them fall into line in the middle of the great quadrangle, leant against the steps, looked at them long and fondly, muttered a few sentences in Persian and then disappeared inside the palace.

Greatly alarmed, we thought at first that he had gone mad; at last we understood: he had been enacting the scene in which the Emperor takes leave of his grenadiers. It may have been very flattering for the dragoons; I doubt if it was quite so flattering for Napoleon.

His visit to the Louvre also lingers in my memory among the more amusing episodes of his stay in Paris. M. Leygues, who was at that time minister of fine-arts and in this capacity did the honours of the museum to the Shah, had resolved carefully to avoid showing our guest the Persian room, fearing lest the King of Kings, who perhaps did not grasp the importance of the priceless collection which Mme. Dieulafoy and M. Morgan had brought back with them, should show a keen vexation at finding himself in the presence of jewels and mosaics which he might have preferred to see in his own country.

The minister, therefore, conducted him through the picture- and sculpture-galleries, trying to bewilder his mind and tire his legs, so that he might declare his curiosity satisfied as soon as possible.

Lo and behold, however, the Shah suddenly said :

" Take me to the Persian room ! "

There was no evading the command. M. Leygues, obviously worried, whispered an order to the chief attendant and suggested to the Shah that he should take a short rest before continuing his inspection. The Shah agreed.

Meantime, in the Persian room, keepers and attendants hurriedly cleared away the more valuable ornaments and mosaics, so that Muzaffr-ed-Din should not feel any too cruel regrets ; and, at last, the King of Kings, far from revealing any disappointment, declared himself delighted to find in Paris so well-arranged a collection of curious remains of ancient Persian architecture and art. And he added, slyly :

" When I have a museum at Teheran, I shall see that we have a French room."

For that matter, he was often capable of administering a sort of snub when we thought that we were providing him with a surprise. For instance, one day, when, with a certain self-conceit, I showed him our three camels in the Jardin d'Acclimatation :

" I own nine thousand ! " he replied, with a scornful smile.

Our zoological gardens did not interest him :

he only twice really enjoyed himself there to my knowledge. The first time was when, at his own request, he was allowed to witness the repugnant sight of a boa-constrictor devouring a live rabbit. This produced, the next morning, the following letter from " a working milliner," which I print " with all faults " :

" MONSIEUR LE CHAH,

" You have been to the Jardin d'Aclimatation (*sic*) and watched the boa-constrictor eating a live rabbit. This was very interesting, so you said. Ugh! How could the King of Kings, an excellency, a magesty (*sic*), find pleasure in the awful torments of that poor rabbit ? I hate people who like going to bull-fights. Cruelty and cowardice go hand in hand. Are you one of the company, monsieur le Chah ? "

The second time that he seemed to amuse himself was on the occasion of a wedding-dance that was being held in a room next to that in which he had stopped to take tea. On hearing the music, he suddenly rose and opened the door leading to the ball-room. The appearance of the devil in person would not have produced a greater confusion than that of this potentate, wearing his high-peaked astrakhan cap and covered with diamonds. But he, without the least uneasiness, went the round of the couples, shook hands with the bride and bridegroom, gave them pieces of Persian gold money and made his excuses to the bride for not having a necklace about him to offer her. . . . I was waiting for him to invite her to accompany him to Teheran: the husband's presence no doubt frightened him!

He seldom left his rooms at night. Sometimes, he went to circus-performances or an extravaganza or musical play; he preferred, however, to devote his evenings to more domestic enjoyments; he loved the pleasures of home life: sometimes, he played with his little sons, "the little shahs," as they were called, nice little boys of seven to thirteen; at other times, he indulged in his favourite games, chess and billiards. He played these with his grand vizier, his court minister, or myself. The stakes at billiards were generally twenty francs, sometimes a hundred. We did our best to lose, for, if we had the bad luck to win, he would show his ill-temper by throwing up the game and retiring into a corner, where his servants lit his great Persian pipe for him, the *kaljan,* a sort of Turkish narghileh, filled with a scented tobacco called *tombeki.* Often, also, to console himself for his mortification at billiards, he called for music. I then heard songs behind the closed hangings, harsh, strange, and also very sweet songs, accompanied on the piano or the violin: it was a sort of evocation of the east in a modern frame; and the contrast, I must say, was rather pleasing.

6

The Shah and I grew accustomed to each other, little by little, and became the best of friends. . . He refused to go anywhere without me; I took part in the drives, in the games at billiards, in the concerts, in all the journeys. We went to Vichy, to Vittel, to Contrexéville. It was here, at Contrexéville, where he had come for the cure, that I saw him for the last time. His eccentricities, his whims and his diamonds had produced the usual effect on the peaceful population of the town.

A few days after his arrival, hearing that H.I.H. the Grand-duchess Vladimir of Russia had taken up her quarters at an hotel near his own, he hastened to call and pay his respects and departed from his habits to the length of inviting her to luncheon.

On the appointed day, the grand-duchess, alighting from her carriage before the residence of her host, found the Shah waiting for her on the threshold in a grey frock-coat, with a rose in his button-hole. He ceremoniously led her by the hand to the dining-room, making her walk through his rooms, the floors of which he had had covered with the wonderful Kashan carpets that accompanied him on all his journeys. The princess, charmed with these delicate attentions on the great man's part, was beginning to congratulate herself on the pleasant surprise which Persian civilization had caused her, when—we had hardly sat down to table—a chamberlain went up to the King of Kings, bowed low and handed him a gold salver, on which lay a queer-looking and, at first, indescribable object. . . . The Shah, without blinking, carelessly put out his hand, took the thing between his fingers and, with an easy and familiar movement, inserted it in his jaw : it was a set of false teeth ! Imagine the consternation !

The grand-duchess, as may be imagined, retained an unforgettable memory of this lunch, the more so as the Shah, perhaps in order to wipe out any unpleasant impression that might linger in her mind, did a very gallant thing : the next day, the Princess Vladimir received a bale of Persian carpets of inestimable value, accompanied by a letter from the grand vizier begging her, in the name of his sovereign, to accept this present, His Majesty having declared that he would allow no other feet to tread carpets on which Her Imperial Highness's had rested.

I, less fortunate than the grand-duchess, never, alas, succeeded in obtaining possession of the one and only carpet which Muzaffr-ed-Din had deigned—quite spontaneously—to offer me.

" My ministers will see that you get it," he said.

When the day of his departure for Persia drew near, I thought that it would be wise to ask the court minister for my carpet in my most respectful manner.

" Oh," he replied, " does it belong to you ?

The only thing is that it has been packed up, by mistake, with the others. If you want it, they can give it to you in the train."

As I was to accompany our guest as far as the German frontier, I waited until we had left Vichy and discreetly repeated my request at the first stop.

" Certainly," said the minister, " you shall have it at the next station."

I was beginning to feel uneasy. At the following stopping-place, there was no sign of a carpet. We were approaching the frontier, where my mission ended. I therefore resolved to apply to the minister of public works.

" Your excellency . . ."

" Your carpet ? " he broke in. " Quite right, my dear M. Paoli. The orders have been given; and you shall have it when you leave us at the other station."

But here again, alas, nothing! And, as I complained to a third excellency of this strange piece of neglect :

" It's an omission. Come with us as far as Strassburg, where you will receive satisfaction."

At this rate, they would have carried me, by easy stages, to Teheran. . . . I therefore gave up all hopes of my carpet. And, taking leave of these amiable functionaries, I heard the good Shah's voice crying in the distance :

" Good-bye, Paoli, worthy Paoli! Till our next meeting! "

I never saw him again.

CHAPTER IV

THE TSAR NICHOLAS II. AND THE TSARITSA ALEXANDRA FEODOROVNA

1

I HAD just reached the Ministry of the Interior and was entering my office, when a messenger came up to me and said, solemnly :

"The prime minister would like to speak to you at once, sir."

When a public official is sent for by his chief,[1] the first thought that flashes across his brain is that of disgrace; and he instinctively makes a rapid and silent examination of conscience to quiet his anxious mind, unless indeed he but ends by alarming it. Nevertheless, I admit that, when I received this message, I took it philosophically. The prime minister, at that time, was M. Waldeck-Rousseau. It is not my business here to pass judgment on the politician; and I have retained a most pleasant recollection of the man. To attractions more purely intellectual he added a certain geniality of disposition. He looked upon events and upon life itself from the point of view of a more or less disillusionized dilettante; and this made him at once satirical, indulgent and obliging. He honoured me with a kindly friendship, notwithstanding the fact that he used to reproach me, in his jesting way, with becoming too much of a reactionary from my contact with the monarchs of Europe, and that I once took his breath away by telling him that I had dined with the Empress Eugénie at Cap Martin.

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[1] In France, the premiership is very often held in conjunction with the portfolio of the Interior or Home Office. —*Translator's Note.*

" A republican official at the Empress's table ! " he cried. " You're the only man, my dear Paoli, who would dare to do such a thing. . . . And you're the only one," he added, slyly, " in whom we would stand it ! "

For all that, when I entered his room on this particular morning, I was struck with his thoughtful air; and my surprise increased still further when I saw him, after shaking hands with me, carefully shut the door and give a glance to make sure that we were quite alone.

" You must not be astonished at these precautions," he began. " I have some news to tell you which, for reasons which you will understand as soon as you hear what the news is, must be kept secret as long as possible . . . and you know that the walls of a ministerial office have very sharp ears. . . . This is the news : I have just heard from the Russian ambassador and from Delcassé that the negotiations which have been on foot between the two governments in view of a second visit of the Tsar and Tsaritsa are at last completed. Their Imperial Majesties will pay an official visit of three days to France. They may come to Paris; in any case, they will stay at the Château de Compiègne, where the sovereigns will take up their quarters, together with the President of the Republic and all of us. They will arrive from Russia by sea; they will land at Dunkirk on the 18th of September; and from there they will go straight by rail to Compiègne. The festivities will end with a visit to Rheims and a review of our eastern frontier troops at Bétheny Camp."

The minister paused, and then continued:

"And now I must ask you to listen to me very carefully. I want *no accident nor unpleasant incident* of any kind to occur during this visit. The Tsar has been made to believe that his safety and the Tsaritsa's run the greatest risks through their coming to France. It is important that we should give the lie in a striking fashion—as we did in 1896—to the bad reputation which our enemies outside are trying to give us. They are simply working against the alliance; and we have the greatest political interest in defeating their machinations. We must, therefore, take every necessary measure accordingly; and I am entrusting this task to Cavard, the chief of the detective-service, Hennion, his colleague, and yourself. You are to divide the work among you. Cavard will control the whole business and settle the details; Hennion, with his remarkable activity, will see that they are carried out and devote himself to the protection of the Tsar; and I have reserved for you the most enviable part of the task: I entrust the Empress to your special care."

The Emperor Nicholas II. and the Empress Alexandra were very nearly the only members of the Russian imperial family whom I did not yet know. At the time when they made their first journey to Paris, to celebrate the conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance, I was in Sweden as the guest of King Oscar, His Majesty having most graciously invited me to spend a period of sick-leave with him; and it was on the deck of his yacht, at the end of a dinner which he gave me in the Bay of Stockholm, that the news of the triumphal reception of the Russian sovereigns had come to gladden my patriotism and his faithful affection for the country which, through his Bernadotte blood, was also his.

On the other hand, I had repeatedly had the honour of attending the grand-dukes; and I was attached to the person of the Tsarevitch George at the time of his two stays on the Côte d'Azur, in the villa which he occupied at the Cap d'Ail, facing the sea, among the orange-trees and thymes. I had beheld the sad and silent tragedy enacted in the mind of that pale and suffering young prince, heir to a mighty empire, whom death had already marked for its own . . . and who knew it! He knew it, but submitted to fate's decree without a murmur. Resigning himself to the inevitable, he strove to enjoy the

THE TSAR, THE TZARITSA, AND THE TSAREVITCH.

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few last pleasures that life still held for him: the sunlight, the flowers and the sea; he sought to beguile the anxiety of his suite and of his doctors by assuming a mask of playful good-humour and an appearance of youthful hope and zest. Lastly, at the same Villa des Terrasses, I had known the Dowager-Empress Marie Feodorovna, whom her great green-and-gold railway-train had brought from Russia with her children, the Grand-duchess Xenia and the Grand-duke Michael, at the first news of a slight relapse on the part of the illustrious patient.

For two long months, I took part in the inner life of that little court; and, more than once, I detected the anguish of the mother stealthily trying to read the secret of her son's hectic eyes, peering at his pale face, watching for his hoarse, hacking cough, as he walked beside her, or dined opposite her, or played at cards with his sister, or, with his long and too-white hands, stroked the head of his lively and slender Russian hound, Moustique.

These memories were already four years old. . . . . How much had happened since! . . . . The Tsarevitch George had gone to the Caucasus to die; the Franco-Russian alliance, the realization of which was contemplated in the interviews at the Cap d'Ail between the Dowager-Empress and Baron de Mohrenheim, the Russian ambassador in Paris, had become an accomplished fact.

This new visit of the allied sovereigns represented an important trump in the game of our policy as against the rest of Europe: it supplied the answer which we felt called upon to make, from time to time, to those who were anxiously awaiting the least event capable of disturbing the Franco-Russian alliance, with a view to exploiting any such event in favour of a rupture.

The reader, therefore, will easily imagine the importance which M. Waldeck-Rousseau attached to his watchword, "No accident nor incident of any kind!"

The measures of protection with which a sovereign is surrounded when he happens to be Emperor of Russia are of a more complicated and delicate character than those adopted in the case of any other monarch. Fiercely guarded by his own police, whose almost brutal zeal, tending as it often does to offend and exasperate, may prove a danger rather than a protection, the Tsar is, unknown to himself, enveloped by the majority of those who hover round him in a network of silent intrigues which keep up a latent spirit of distrust and dismay.

It does not fall within my present scope nor do I here intend to frame an indictment against the Russian police. For that matter, tragic incidents and regrettable scandals enough have revealed the sinister and intricate underhand methods of that occult force in such a way as to leave no doubt of its nature in men's minds. I will content myself with confessing that, although the numberless anonymous letters which we received at the Ministry of the Interior before the Tsar's arrival mostly failed to excite us, the appearance, on the other hand, of certain obnoxious persons, who came to concert with us as to "the measures to be taken," nearly always resulted in awakening secret terrors within us. . . . I became acquainted, in this way, with some of the celebrated figures of the Russian secret police: the famous Harting was one of their number; and it is also possible that I may have consorted, without knowing it, with the mysterious Azeff. My clearest recollection of my relations with these gentry—always excepting M. Raskowsky, the chief of the Russian police in Paris—is that we thought it wise to keep them under observation and to hide from them, as far as possible, the measures which we proposed to adopt for the safety of their sovereigns!

As I have shown above, the responsibility of organizing those measures on the occasion of the Tsar's journey in 1901 was entrusted to M. Cavard, the head of the French political police; but the honour of ensuring their proper performance was due above all to M. Hennion, his chief lieutenant, who has now succeeded him. In point of fact, M. Cavard's long and brilliant administrative career had not prepared him for such rough and tiring tasks. An excellent official, this honest man, whose high integrity it is a pleasure to me to recognize, had a better grasp of the sedentary work of the offices. Hennion, on the contrary, "knew his business" and possessed its special qualifications. Endowed with a remarkable spirit of initiative and an invariable coolness, eager, indefatigable and shrewd, fond of fighting, with a quick scent of danger, he was always seen in the breach and he knew how to be everywhere when wanted. This was an invaluable quality when the zone to be protected extended, as it did in this case, over a length of several hundred miles and embraced almost half France.

Our measures consisted, first of all, in doubling the watch kept on foreigners living in France and notably on the Russian anarchists. The copious information which we possessed about their antecedents and their movements made our task an easy one. Paris, like every other large city in Europe, contains a pretty active focus of nihilism. This is made up mainly of students and of young women, who are generally more formidable than the men. Still, these revolutionary spirits always prefer theory to action; and they were consequently less to be feared than others who, on the pretext of seeing the festivities, might come from abroad charged with a criminal mission.

We had, therefore, established observation-posts in all the frontier-stations, posts composed of officers who lost no time in shadowing the steps of any suspicious traveller. But, however minute our investigations might be, it was still possible for the threads of a plot to escape us; and we had to prepare ourselves against possible surprises at places where it was known that the sovereigns were likely to be. A special watch had to be kept along the railways over which the imperial train would travel and in the streets through which the procession would pass. For this purpose, as usual, we divided the line from Dunkirk to Compiègne and from Compiègne to the frontier into sections and sub-sections, each placed under the command of the district commissary of police, who had under his orders the local police force and gendarmery, reinforced by the troops stationed in the department. Posted at intervals on either side of the line, at the entrance and issue of the tunnels, on and under the bridges, sentries, with loaded rifles, prevented any one from approaching and had orders to raise an alarm if they saw the least suspicious object lying on or near the rails.

We also identified the tenants of all the houses situated either along the railway-line or in the streets through which our guests were likely to drive. As a matter of fact, what we most feared was the traditional outrage perpetrated or attempted from a window. On the other hand, we refused (contrary to what has been stated) to adopt the system employed by the Spanish, German and Italian police on the occasion of any visit from a sovereign, the system which consists in arresting all the " suspects " during the period of the royal guest's stay. This proceeding not only appeared to us needlessly vexatious, for it constitutes a flagrant attempt upon the liberty of the individual, but we thought that, with our democracy, there was a danger of its alienating the sympathies of our population from our illustrious visitors. We had, therefore, to be content to forestall any possible catastrophes by other and less arbitrary means.

2

Our vigilance was naturally concentrated with the greatest attention upon Compiègne. We sent swarms of police to beat the forest and search every copse and thicket; and the château itself was inspected from garret to basement by our most trusted detectives. These precautions, however, seemed insufficient to our colleagues of the Russian police. A fortnight before the arrival of the sovereigns, one of them, taking us aside, said:

" The cellars must be watched."

" But it seems to us," we replied, " that we cannot very well do more than we are doing: they are visited every evening; and there are men posted at all the doors."

" Very good: but how do you know that your men will not be bribed and that the ' terrorists ' will not succeed, unknown to you, in placing an explosive machine in some dark corner ? "

" Then what do you suggest ? "

" Put men upon whom you can rely, here and now, in each cellar, with instructions to remain there night and day until Their Majesties' departure. And, above all, see that they hold no communication with the outside. They must prepare their own meals."

The solution may have been ingenious, but we declined to entertain it: we considered, in point of fact, that it was unnecessary, two weeks before the coming of the Emperor and Empress, to condemn a number of respectable men to underground imprisonment, a form of torture which had not been inflicted on even the worst criminals for more than a century past.

On the other hand, we mixed detectives with the large staff of workmen who were engaged in restoring the old château to its ancient splendour. The erstwhile imperial residence, which had stood empty since the war, now rose again from its graceful and charming past as though by the stroke of a fairy's wand. The authorities hastily collected the most sumptuous remains of the former furniture now scattered over our museums. Gradually, the deserted halls and abandoned bedrooms were once more filled, in the same places, with the same objects that had adorned them in days gone by. The apartments set aside for the Tsar and Tsaritsa were those once occupied by the Emperors Napoleon I. and Napoleon III. and the Empresses Marie-Louise and Eugénie. As we passed through them, our eyes were greeted by the wonderful Beauvais tapestries, of which the King of Prussia one day said that "no king's fortune was large enough to buy them;" we hesitated before treading on the exquisite Savonnerie carpets, with which

Louis XIV. had covered the floors of Versailles; in the Tsaritsa's boudoir we admired Marie-Louise's cheval-glass; in her bedroom we found the proud arch-duchess's four-poster; in Nicholas II.'s bedroom we discovered a relic: the bed of Napoleon I., the beautifully-carved mahogany bedstead in which the man whom a great historian called "that terrible antiquarian" and whom no battle had wearied, dreamt of the empire of Charlemagne. . . . Was it not a striking irony of fate that thus awarded the conqueror's pillow to the first promoter of peaceful arbitration?

While upholsterers, gardeners, carpenters, locksmiths and painters were producing this amazing metamorphosis, the ministry was drawing up the programme of the rejoicings and calling in the aid of the greatest poets, the most illustrious artists, the prettiest and most talented ballet-dancers. . . . Rehearsals were held in the theatre where, years ago, the Prince Imperial had made his first appearance; the carriages were tried in the avenues of the park; a swarm of butlers and footmen were taught court etiquette in the servants' hall; and certain ministers' wives, trusting to the discreet solitude of their boudoirs, took lessons in solemn curtseying. All spent days and weeks of feverish expectation, during which everything had to be improvised for the occasion; for this was the first time since its advent that the republic was entertaining her guests outside Paris.

And then the great day came. One morning, on the platform of the Gare du Nord, a gentleman dressed in black, with beard neatly trimmed, followed by ministers, generals and more persons in black, including myself, stepped into a special train. He had been preceded by a valet carrying three bags. The first—is it not a detective's duty to know everything ?—was a dressing-case containing silver-stopped crystal fittings; the second, which was long and flat, held six white shirts, twelve collars, three night-shirts, a pair of slippers and two broad ribbons, one red, the other blue; and in the third were packed a brand-new dress-suit, six pairs of white gloves and three pairs of patent-leather boots. M. Loubet, calm and smiling, was starting for Dunkirk to meet his guests.

3

My first impression of the young sovereigns was very different from that which I expected. To judge by the fantastic measures taken in anticipation of their arrival and by the atmosphere of suspicion and mystery which people had been pleased to create around them, we were tempted to picture them as grave, solemn, haughty, mystical and distrustful; and our thoughts turned, in spite of ourselves, to the court of Ivan the Terrible rather than to that of Peter the Great.

Then, suddenly, our ideas were changed. When we saw them close at hand, we beheld a very united couple, very simple and kindly, anxious to please everybody and to fall in with everybody's wishes, obviously hating official pomp and ceremony and regretting to be continually separated by impenetrable barriers from the rest of the world. We perceived that they loved to throw aside reserve, that they were capable of endless delicacy of thought, especially for their humbler fellow-creatures. We detected in the laughter in *his* eyes a frank and youthful gaiety that itched at restraint; and we suspected in the melancholy of *hers* the secret tragedy of an ever-anxious affection, of a destiny weighed down by the burden of a crown in which there were all too many thorns and too few roses.

I think, besides, that an erroneous opinion has been generally formed of the Tsar's character. He has been said and is still said to be a weak man. Now I should be inclined, on this point, to agree with M. Loubet that Nicholas II.'s " weakness " is more apparent than real, and that in him, as formerly in our Napoleon III., there is " a gentle obstinate " who has strong notions of his own, a being conscious of his power and proud of the glory of his name.

It is true that the rectilinear horizontal slant of the letters composing the signature reveals a loving, imaginative, intuitive disposition, which feels a subtle need of sympathy and affection. On the other hand, observe the strong and protecting pride of the *N*, the stubbornness of the hook that ends it, the vigour of realization denoted by the dot on the *i*, the force of the bold flourish pointing to justice and generosity and an implacable will.

Nicholas II. had met M. Loubet before the time of this second visit. When the Emperor first came to France, in 1896, the future President of the Republic was president of the Senate and, in this capacity, had not only been presented to the sovereign, but had received a visit from him. In this connection, the late M. Félix Faure used to tell an amusing story, which he said that he had from the Tsar in person.

It was after a luncheon at the Élysée. Nicholas II. had told President Faure that he would like to call on the president of the Senate and expressed a wish to go to the Palais du Luxembourg, if possible, incognito. A landau was at once provided, without an escort; and the Emperor stepped in, accompanied by General de Boisdeffre. At that hour, the peaceful Luxembourg quarter was almost deserted. The people in the streets, expecting the Tsar to drive back to the Russian Embassy, had drifted in that direction to cheer him.

Wishing first to find out if M. Loubet was there, General de Boisdeffre had ordered the coachman to stop a few yards from the palace, opposite the gate of the Luxembourg gardens. He then alighted to enquire and to tell the president of the Senate that an august visitor was waiting at his door.

The Tsar, left alone in his carriage and delighted at feeling free and at his ease, looked out of the window with all the zest of a schoolboy playing truant. He saw before him one of those picturesque street Arabs who seem to sprout between the paving-stones of Paris. This particular specimen, seated against the railings, was whistling the refrain of the Russian national hymn, with his nose in the air. Suddenly their eyes met. The wondering street-boy sprang to his feet : he had never seen the Emperor, but he had seen his photograph; and the likeness was striking.

" Supposing it *is* Nicholas," he said to himself, greatly puzzled.

And, as he was an inquisitive lad, he resolved to make sure without delay. He took an heroic decision, walked up to within a yard of the carriage and there, bobbing down his head, shouted in a hoarse voice to the unknown foreigner :

" How's the Empress ? "

Picture his stupefaction—for he really only thought that he was having a good joke—when he heard the stranger reply, with a smile :

" Thank you, the Empress is very well and is delighted with her journey."

The boy, then and there, lost his tongue. He stared at the speaker in dismay; and then, after raising his cap, stalked away slowly . . . very slowly, to mark his dignity.

Nicholas II. retained a delightful recollection of this private interview with a true-born Parisian, and long amused himself by scandalizing the formal set around him with the story of his adventure.

4

If, on his second stay, he did not have the occasion of coming into contact with the people, he none the less enjoyed the satisfaction of being admirably received.

The incidents of the first day of this memorable visit, from the moment when, on the deck of the *Standart*, lying off Dunkirk, the sovereigns, according to custom, received the salute of the sailors and the blessing of the old pope in his violet cassock : these incidents have been too faithfully chronicled in the press for me to linger over them here. It was a magnificent landing, amid the thunder of the guns and the hurrahs of the enthusiastic populace. Then came the journey from Dunkirk to Compiègne, a real triumphal progress, in which the cheers along the line seemed to travel almost as fast as the train, for they were linked from town to town, from village to village, from farm to farm. . . . At last came the arrival, at nightfall, in the little illuminated town, followed by the torchlight procession, in which the fantastic figure of the red cossack stood out as he clung to the back of the Empress's carriage; the entrance into the courtyard of the château, all ablaze with light; the slow ascent of the staircases lined by motionless cuirassiers, with swords drawn, and powdered footmen, in their blue liveries *à la française;*[1] and, lastly, the presentations, enlivened, at a given moment, by the artless question which a minister's wife, in a great state of excitement and only anxious to please, addressed to the Empress:

"How are your little ones?"

5

Although I had taken up my duties, which, as the reader knows, consisted more particularly in ensuring the personal safety of the Empress, at the time of leaving Dunkirk, I had as yet caught but a glimpse of that gracious lady. A few hours after our arrival at the château, chance made me come across her; and she deigned to speak to me. I doubt whether she observed my state of flurry; and yet, that evening, without knowing it, she was the cause of a strange hallucination in my mind.

I had left the procession at the entrance to the

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[1] The *habit à la française*, once a military coat, now used purely for livery, is a heavily embroidered coat, similar to that of an English flunkey, but of a less voluminous cut and shorter.—*Translator's Note.*

THE GRAND-DUCHESS NICOLAJEVNA OF RUSSIA—ONE OF THE TSAR'S CHILDREN.

THE TZARITSA ALEXANDRA FEODOROVNA, WEARING THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL DRESS.

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State drawing-rooms, in order to ascertain if our orders had been faithfully carried out in and around the imperial apartments. Gradually, as I penetrated the maze of long and silent corridors, filled with my own officers, impassive in their footmen's liveries, a crowd of confused memories rose in my brain. I remembered a certain evening, similar to the present, when the palace was all lit up for a celebration. I, at that time still a young student, had come to see my kinsman, Dr. Conneau, physician to the Emperor Napoleon III. We were going along the same corridors together, when, suddenly holding me back by the sleeve and pointing to a proud and radiant fair-haired figure that passed through the vivid brightness of a distant gallery, he said :

" The Empress ! "

Now, at the same spot, forty years after, another voice, that of one of my inspectors, came and whispered in my ear :

" The Empress ! "

I started. . . . In front of me, at the end of the gallery, a figure, also radiant and also fair, had suddenly come into view. She continued her progress, proceeding to her apartments, followed by her ladies-in-waiting. When she was at a few yards from the place where I stood motionless, her eyes fell upon me ; then she came up to me and, holding out her white and slender hand :

" I am glad to see you, M. Paoli," she said, "for I know how highly my dear grandmother, Queen Victoria, used to think of you."

What she did not know was how often Queen Victoria had spoken of her to me. That great sovereign, in fact, cherished a special affection for the child of her idolized daughter, the Grand-duchess Alice of Hesse. The child reminded her of the happy time when the princess wrote to her from Darmstadt, on the day after the birth of the future Empress of Russia:

"She is the personification of her nickname, 'Sunny,' much like Ella, but a smaller head, and livelier, with Ernie's dimple and expression."

Then, a few days later:

"We think of calling her Alix (Alice they pronounce too dreadfully in Germany) Helena Louisa Beatrice; and, if Beatrice may, we would like to have her for godmother."

And these charming and touching letters continued through the years that followed. The baby had grown into a little girl, the little girl into a young girl; and her mother kept Queen Victoria informed of the least details concerning the child. She was anxious, fond and proud by turns; and over and over again she asked for advice:

"I strive to bring her up totally free from pride of her position, which is nothing save what her personal merit can make it. I feel so entirely as you do on the difference of rank and how all important it is for Princes and Princesses to know that they are nothing better or above others save through their own merit, and that they have only the double duty of living for others and of being an example, good and modest."

Next come further charming details. Princess Alice, returning to her children at Darmstadt after a visit to England, writes to the Queen :

" They eat me up ! They had made wreaths over the doors and had no end of things to tell me.

" We arrived at three, and there was not a moment's rest till they were all in bed and I had heard the different prayers of the six, with all the different confidences they had to make."

Elsewhere, interesting particulars about the education of Princess Alix, an exclusively English education, very simple and very healthy, the programme of which included every form of physical exercise, such as bicycling, skating, tennis and riding, and allowed her, by way of pocket-money, fifty Pfennigs a week between the ages of four and eight; one Mark from eight to twelve; and two Marks from twelve to sixteen.

In the twenty-nine years that had passed since the first of these letters was written, what a number of events had occurred ! Princess Alice, that admirable mother, had died from kissing her son Ernie, who was suffering from diphtheria; the royal grandmother, in her turn, had died quite recently. Of the seven children whose gaiety brightened the domestic charm of the little court at Darmstadt, two had perished in a tragic fashion: Prince Fritz first, killed by an accidental fall from a window, while playing with his brother; and Princess May, carried off in twenty-four hours, she, too, by diphtheria caught at the bedside of her sister "Aliky," the present Empress of Russia. As for the other "dear little ones," as Queen Victoria called them, they had all been dispersed by fate. "Ella" had become the Grand-duchess Serge of Russia; "Ernie" had succeeded his father on the throne of Hesse; two of his three remaining sisters had married, one Prince Henry of Prussia, the other Prince Louis of Battenberg; and the youngest had become the wearer of the heaviest of all crowns. And now chance placed her here, before me.

I looked at her with, in my mind, the memory of the letters which an august and kindly condescension had permitted me to read and of the gentle emotion with which the good and great Queen used to speak of the Princess Alice and of her daughter, the present Empress of Russia. Her features had not yet acquired, under the imperial diadem, that settled air of melancholy which the obsession of a perpetual danger was to bestow upon her later: in the brilliancy of her full-blown youth, which set a glad pride upon her tall, straight forehead; in the golden sheen of her queenly hair; in her grave and limpid blue eyes, through which flashed gleams of sprightly fancy; in her smile, still marked by the dimples of her girlish days, I recognized her to whom the fond imagination of a justly-proud mother had awarded, in her cradle, the pretty nickname of "Sunny."

She stood talking to me for a few moments. Before moving away, she said:

"I believe you are commissioned to 'look after' me?"

"That is so, Ma'am," I replied.

"I hope," she added, laughing, "that I shall not give you too much worry."

I dared not confess to her that it was not only worry, but perpetual anguish that her presence and the Tsar's were causing us.

6

We had to be continually on the watch, to have safe men at every door, in every passage, on every floor; we had to superintend the smallest details. I remember, for instance, standing by for nearly two hours while the Empress's dresses were being unpacked, so great was our fear lest a disguised bomb might be slipped into one of the sovereign's numerous trunks while the women were arranging the gowns in the special presses and cupboards intended to receive them. Lastly, day and night, we had to go on constant rounds, both inside and outside the château.

On the occasion of one of these minute investigations, I met with a rather interesting adventure. Not far from the apartments reserved for the Empress Alexandra's ladies was an unoccupied room, the door of which was locked. It appeared that, during the Empire, this room had been used by Mme. Bruat, the Prince Imperial's governess, widow of Admiral Bruat. At a time when every apartment in the château was thrown open for the visit of our imperial guests, why did this one alone remain closed? I was unable to say. In any case, my duty obliged me to leave no corner unexplored; and, on the first evening, I sent for a bunch of keys. After a few ineffectual attempts, the lock yielded, the door opened . . . and imagine my bewilderment! In a charming disorder, tin soldiers, dancing-dolls, rocking-horses and beautiful picture-books lay higgledy-piggledy in the middle of the room, around a great big ugly plush bear!

I enquired and found that they were the Prince Imperial's toys: they had been left there and forgotten for thirty years. And an interesting coincidence was that the big bear was the last present made by the Tsar Alexander II. to the little prince.

I softly closed the door which I had opened upon the past: I resolved to respect those playthings; there are memories which are better left unawakened.

The next morning, chance allowed me to assist at a sight which many a photographer would have been glad to "snap." The Tsar and the Tsaritsa, who are both very early risers, had gone down to the garden, accompanied by their great greyhound, which answered to the name of Lofki. The Tsar was expected to go shooting that morning, in anticipation of which intention the keepers had spent the night in filling the park with pheasants, roedeer and hares. Their labours were wasted: Nicholas II. preferred to stroll round the lawns with the Empress. She was bare-headed and had simply put up a parasol against the sun, which was shining with dazzling brightness; she carried a camera slung over her shoulder. The young couple, whom I followed hidden behind a shrubbery, turned their steps towards the covered walk of hornbeams which Napoleon I. had had made for Marie-Louise. They hoped, no doubt, to find, in the shade of this beautiful leafy vault, which autumn was already decking with its copper hues, a discreet solitude suited to the billing and cooing of the pair of lovers that they were. . . . But the departments of public ceremon and public safety were on the look-out: already, inside the bosky tunnel, fifty soldiers, commanded by a lieutenant, were presenting arms!

The sovereigns had to make the best of a bad job. The Emperor reviewed the men with a serious face and the Empress photographed them and promised to send the lieutenant a print as soon as the plate was developed. Thereupon the Tsar and Tsaritsa walked away in a different direction. A charming little wood appeared before their eyes. Lofki was running ahead of them. Suddenly, a furious barking was heard; and four gendarmes emerged from behind a clump of fir-trees and gave the military salute!

There was nothing to be done; and the sovereigns gaily accepted the situation. With a merry burst of laughter, they turned on their heels and resolved to go back to the château. By way of consolation the Tsaritsa amused herself by photographing her husband, who, in his turn, took a snapshot of his wife.

They showed no bitterness on account of the disappointment which their walk must have caused them. In fact, to anybody who asked him, on his return, if he had enjoyed his stroll, Nicholas II. contented himself with saying:

"Oh yes, the grounds are beautiful; and I now know what you mean by 'a well-minded property!'"

While life was being arranged in the great palace and every one settling down as if he were to stay there for a month, instead of three days; while the head of the kitchens, acting under the inspiration of the head of the ceremonial department, was cudgelling his brains to bring his menu into harmony with politics by introducing subtle alliances of French and Russian dishes; while the musicians were tuning their violins for the "gala" concert of the evening, and Mme. Bartet, that divine actress, preparing to speak M. Edmond Rostand's famous lines beginning, "*Oh! Oh! Voici une impératrice!*"[1] while the Tsaritsa, at first a little lost amid these new surroundings, found a friend in the Marquise de Montebello, our agreeable ambassadress in St. Petersburg, of whom people used to say that she justified Turguenieff's epigram when he declared that, wherever you see a Frenchwoman, you see all France; while the most complete serenity seemed to reign among the inhabitants of the château, a solemn question was stirring all men's minds. Would the Tsar go to Paris? As it was, the people of Paris were disappointed because the reception had not been held in the capital, as in 1896. Would he give it the compensation of a few hours' visit? A special train was waiting, with steam up, in the station at Compiègne; long confabulations took place between the Emperor and M. Waldeck-Rousseau; luncheon was prepared at the Élysée, with a view to the entertainment of an illustrious guest; secret orders were given to the police. In short, nobody doubted but that Nicholas II. intended to carry out a plan which everybody ascribed to him.

Nothing came of it. The Tsar did not go to Paris.

This sudden change of purpose was interpreted in different ways. Some people pretended that the prime minister was at the bottom of it, M. Waldeck-Rousseau having declared that he could not answer for the Emperor's safety in view of the inadequate nature of the preparations. In reality, we never learnt the true reasons; and I have often asked myself whether this regrettable decision should not be attributed to the influence of "Philippe."

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[1] "Oho! An empress comes this way!"

"Philippe" was a strange, disconcerting being, who had something of the quack about him and something of the prophet, and who followed the Tsar like a shadow.

His story was an astounding one from start to finish. He was a native of Lyons—a Frenchman, therefore—who pretended, with the aid of mystic practices and of inner voices which he called forth and consulted, to cure maladies, to forestall dangers, to foresee future events. . . . He gave consultations and wrote prescriptions, for he did not reject the aid of science. And, as he came within the law which forbids the practice of medicine by unqualified persons, he hit upon the expedient of marrying his daughter to a doctor, who acted as his man of straw. His waiting-room was never empty from the day when the Grand-duke Nicholas Michaelovitch, chancing to pass through Lyons and to hear of this mysterious personage, thought that he would consult him about his rheumatism. What happened? Nobody knows exactly; but this much is certain, that the grand-duke, on returning to Russia, declared that Philippe had cured him as though by magic, and that he possessed the power not only of driving out pain, but of securing the fulfilment of every wish. . . The Emperor, at that time, was longing for an heir. Greatly impressed by his cousin's stories and by his profound conviction, he resolved to summon the miracle-monger to St. Petersburg. This laid the foundation of Philippe's fortunes. Admirably served by his lucky star, highly intelligent, gifted with the manners of an apostle and an appearance of absolute disinterestedness, he gradually succeeded in acquiring a considerable hold not only on the imperial family, but on the whole court. People began to believe very seriously in his supernatural powers. Made much of and respected, he had free access to the sovereigns and ended by supplanting both doctors and advisers. He also treated cases at a distance, by autosuggestion. Whenever he obtained leave to go home on a visit, he kept up with his illustrious clients an exchange of telegrams that would tend to make us smile, if they did not stupefy us at the thought of so much credulity. Thus, a given person of quality would wire :

" Suffering violent pains head; entreat give relief."

Whereupon Philippe would at once reply :

" Have concentrated thought on pain; expect cure between this and four o'clock to-morrow."

This is not an invention. I have seen the telegrams.

For people to have so blind a faith in his mediation, he must obviously have effected a certain number of cures. As a matter of fact, I believe that the power of the will is such that, in certain affections which depended partly upon the nervous system, he succeeded in suggesting to a patient that he was not and could not be ill.

However, what was bound to happen happened. His star declined from the day when people became persuaded that he was not infallible. The Tsar's set precipitated his disgrace, when the Tsaritsa brought another daughter into the world, instead of the promised son. One fine day, Philippe went back to Lyons for good; he died there a few years ago. And, in the following year, the mighty empire had an heir!

At the time of the visit of the sovereigns to Compiègne, he was still at the height of his favour. He accompanied our imperial hosts; and his presence at the château surprised us as much as anything. In fact, like the Doge of Venice who came to Versailles under Louis XIV., Philippe himself might have said:

"What astonishes me most is to see myself here!"

But Philippe was astonished at nothing. Anxious to retain his personality in the midst of that gold-laced crowd, he walked about the apartments in a grey suit and brown shoes: on the first day, he was within an ace of being arrested; we took him for an anarchist!

Our extreme distrust, to which the unfortunate Philippe nearly fell a victim, was only too well justified. I believe that I am not guilty of an indiscretion—for the memorable events of 1901 are now a matter of history—when I say to-day that there was an attempt, an attempt of which our guests never heard, because a miraculous accident enabled us to defeat its execution in the nick of time.

It was in the cathedral of Rheims that the criminal effort was to be accomplished during the visit of the sovereigns, who had expressed a desire to see the inside of that exquisite fabric. On learning of Their Majesties' intention, our colleagues of the Russian police displayed the greatest nervousness:

"Nothing could be easier," they told us, a few days before the visit, "than for a terrorist to deposit a bomb in some dark place, under a chair, behind a confessional, or at the foot of a statue. . . The interior of the cathedral must be watched from this moment, together with the people who enter it."

Although we had already thought of this, they decided, on their part, to entrust this task to an "informer"—in other words, a spy—of Belgian nationality, who had joined the Russian detective-service. Hennion, who was always prudent, hastened, in his turn, to set a watch on the "informer." Twenty-four hours later, one of his men came to see him in a great state of fright:

"M. Hennion," he said, "I have obtained proofs that the 'informer' is connected with a gang of terrorists. They are preparing an attack in the cathedral ! "

Hennion did not hesitate for a moment. He hastened to Rheims, instituted a police-search in a room which the " informer " had secretly hired under a false name and seized a correspondence which left no doubt whatever as to the existence of the plot. The " informer " himself was to do the dirty work !

He was at once arrested and pressed with questions :

" I swear that I know nothing about it," he exclaimed, " and that's the plain truth ! "

" Very well," said Hennion, who held absolute proofs. " Take this man to prison, since he's telling the truth, and bring him back when he decides to tell a lie."

The next day, the man confessed.

This was the only tragic episode that occurred during the imperial visit. Nevertheless, in spite of the satisfaction which we had felt at receiving the Tsar and Tsaritsa, we heaved a sigh of relief when, on the following day, we saw the train that was to take them back to Russia steam out of the station.

They were still alive, God be praised, but that was almost more than could be said of us !

CHAPTER V

THE KING AND QUEEN OF ITALY

1

I HAVE always harboured a vagrant spirit under my frock-coat of office. I find my pleasure and relaxation in travelling. And I took advantage of a few weeks' leave of absence, allowed me after the departure of the Russian sovereigns, to pay a visit to Italy.

Shortly after my arrival at Milan, I was strolling, one afternoon, in the well-known Galleria Vittorio-Emmanuele—that favourite Milanese and cosmopolitan resort, whose incessant and picturesque animation presages the gaiety, if not the charm of Italy—when the window of a glove-shop caught my eye and reminded me that I had left my gloves in the railway-carriage. I thought I might as well buy myself a new pair; and I entered the shop. A customer had gone in before me. It was a lady, young, tall and slender, quietly but elegantly dressed in a plain, dark travelling-frock. Through the long blue motor-veil that close-shrouded her head and face, a pair of eyes gleamed, black and, as I thought, large and beautiful; her hair was dark and, as far as

I could see, there were masses of it; the features seemed refined and pretty. Leaning on the counter, she tried on the gloves which a young shop-assistant handed her. None of them fitted.

" They are too large," she said, shyly.

"That is because the signora has so small a hand," replied the young assistant, gallantly.

She smiled and did not answer; an elderly lady who was with her gave the youth an indignant and scandalized glance. After patiently allowing the measure to be taken of her hand, open and closed—it was indeed a very small one—she ended by finding two pairs of gloves to suit her, paid for them and went out.

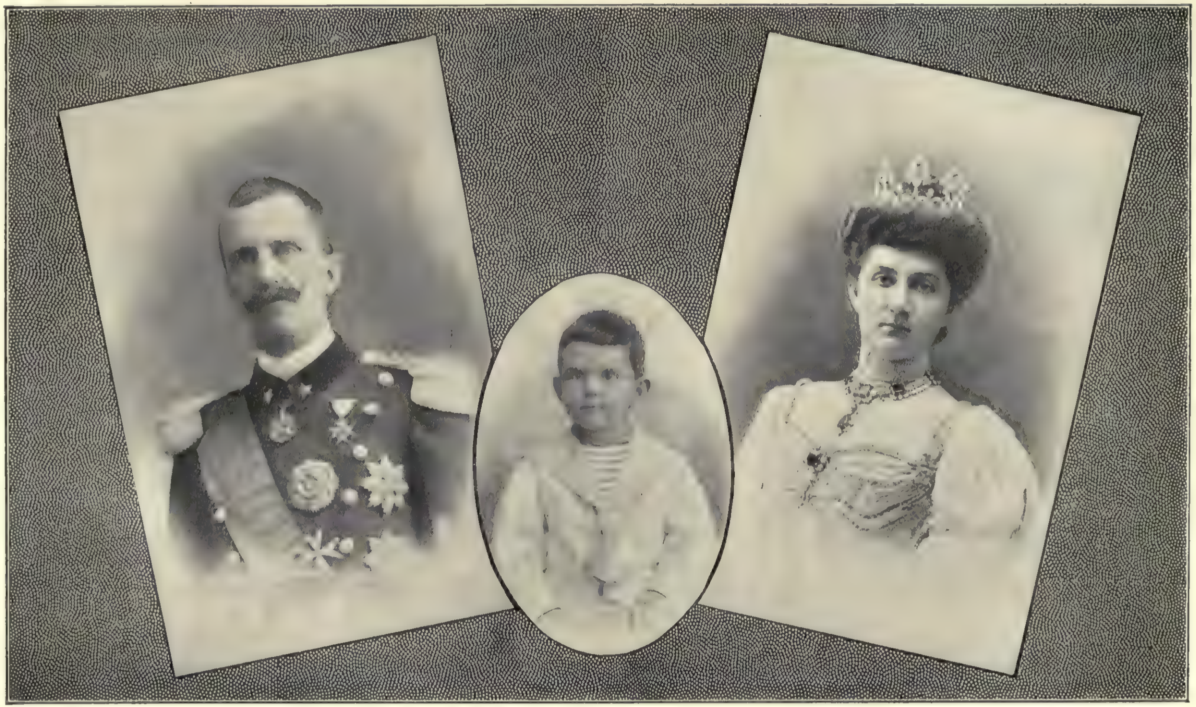
Just then, the owner of the shop returned. He looked at the lady, gave a bewildered start, bowed very low and, as soon as she was gone, shouted to his assistant:

" Have you the least idea whom you have been serving ? "

" A very pretty woman, I know that ! "

" Idiot ! It was the Queen ! "

The Queen ! It was my turn to feel bewildered. The Queen, alone, unprotected, in that arcade full of people ! I was on the point of following her, from professional habit, forgetting that I was at Milan not as an official, but as a private tourist. A still more important reason stopped my display of zeal : it was too late ; the charming vision was lost in the crowd.



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2

The next evening, I was dining at a friend's house, where the guests belonged, for the most part, to the official and political world. When I related my adventure and expressed my astonishment at having met the sovereign making her own purchases in town, accompanied by a stern-faced lady-in-waiting :

" Did that surprise you ? " I was asked. " It does not surprise us at all. One of our haughty princesses of the House of Savoy has said, sarcastically, that we have gone back to the times when kings used to mate with shepherdesses. That was merely a disrespectful sally. The truth is that both our King and Queen have very simple tastes and like to live as ordinary people, in so far as their obligations permit them. Let me give you an instance in point : whenever they come to Milan—and they never stay here for longer than two or three days—they go to the royal palace, of course, but, instead of living in the State apartments and bringing a large number of servants with them, they prefer to occupy just a few rooms, have their meals sent in from the Ristorante Cova and order the dishes all to be brought up at the same time and placed on a sideboard. Then they dismiss the servants, shut the doors and wait upon themselves."

In our sunny countries—I can speak for them, as a Corsican—we love pomp and ceremony. I seemed to observe in the friends who gave me this striking illustration of the royal simplicity a touch of bitterness, perhaps of regret. Remarks that reached my ears later made me come to the conclusion that the aristocracy, if not the people, disapproved of their sovereign's democratic tendencies, which contrasted with the ways of the old court, of which Queen Margherita had been the soul and still remained the living and charming embodiment.

No doubt, Queen Helena's "manner" was entirely different from that of Margherita of Savoy, whose highly-developed and refined culture, whose apposite wit, whose engaging mode of address, built up of shades that appealed to delicate minds, had attracted to the Quirinal the pick of intellectual, artistic and literary Italy and held it bound in fervent admiration. Educated at the court of her father, Prince Nicholas, Helena of Montenegro had grown up amid the austere scenery of her native land, in constant contact with the rugged simplicity of the Montenegrin highlanders; her wide-open child-eyes had never rested on other than grave and manly faces; her girlhood was decked not with fairy-tales, but with the old, wild legends of the mountains, or else with epics extolling the heroism of those who, in the days of old, had driven the foreign invader from the valleys of Antivari and the lofty uplands of Cettinje. At the age of twelve, she was sent to St. Petersburg to finish her studies. There, in the promiscuous intercourse of a convent confined to young ladies of gentle birth, she had known the charm of friendships that removed all differences of social rank between her fellow-pupils and herself, while her mind opened out to the somewhat melancholy beauties of Slav literature. On returning to her country, she enjoyed, in the fulness of an independence wholly undisturbed by the demands of etiquette, the healthy delights of an open-air life, which she divided between water-colour drawing, in which she excelled, and sport, in which she showed herself fearless.

She saw Italy for the first time in 1895 and saw it through the gates of Venice, where her father had taken her on the occasion of an exhibition. One evening, in the midst of the novel and fairy-like scene of the lagoon arrayed in its holiday attire, she beheld the homage of a glowing admiration in the eyes of the then Prince of Naples; and it will readily be conceived that she was flurried and not a little dazzled. In the following year, she bade farewell to her craggy mountains and to the proud highlanders, the companions of her childhood; and it will be understood that, when she saw the gay and enthusiastic nation of Italy hastening to welcome her, the twenty-year-old bride, with all the hopes and all the promises which she brought with her, she at first experienced a sense of shyness and confusion.

The shyness, I am told, has never completely worn off. On the other hand, in the absence of more brilliant outward qualities, Queen Helena has displayed admirable domestic virtues; she has known how to show herself a queen in all that regards the noble and delicate missions of devotion and goodness to the poor and lowly. And she has done better than that: she has realized her engrossing duties as wife and mother; and these are sweet and dear to her.

Had things been otherwise, the king's temper, which is quick to take offence, and his jealous fondness would have suffered cruelly. He too is shy, he too is a man of domestic habits, who has always avoided society and pleasure. Possessing none of the physical qualities that attract the crowd, endowed with an unimaginative, but, on the other hand, a reflective and studious mind, remarkably well-informed, highly-intelligent and passionately interested in social problems and the exact sciences, none was readier than he to enjoy the charm of a peaceful home which he had never known during his youth. Great though the attachment between the son and mother was, they nevertheless remained separated by differences in character, temperament and ideas. Whereas Queen Margherita kept all her enthusiasm for art and literature, the Prince of Naples displayed, if not a repugnance, at least a complete indifference to such matters. When he was only ten years of age, he said to his piano-mistress, Signora Cerasoli, who was appointed by his mother and who vainly struggled to instil the first principles of music into his mind :

" Don't you think that twenty trumpets are more effective than that piano of yours ? "

To make amends, he showed from his earliest youth a marked predilection for military science. He had the soul of a soldier and submitted, without a murmur, to the strict discipline imposed upon him by his tutor, Colonel Osio. He is still fond of relating, as one of the pleasantest memories of his life, the impression which he felt on the day when King Humbert first entrusted him with the command of a company of foot at the annual review of the Roman garrison :

" The excitement interfered so greatly with my power of sight," he says, " that the only people I recognized in the cheering crowd were my dentist and my professor of mathematics."

His keen love of the army became manifest when, as heir apparent, he received the command of the army-corps of Naples. Frivolous and light-headed Neapolitan society looked forward to receiving a worldly-minded prince and rejoiced accordingly; but it soon discovered its mistake : the prince, scorning pleasure, devoted himself exclusively to his profession and left his barracks only to go straight back to the Capodimonte Palace, where he spent his spare time in perfecting himself in the study of military tactics.

When, at last, the tragedy of Monza called him suddenly to the throne, the manliness of his attitude, the firmness of his character and the soberness of his mind impressed the uneasy and disunited world of politics. He insisted upon drawing up his first proclamation to the Italian people with his own hand and in it proved himself a man of the times, thoroughly acquainted with the needs and aspirations of modern Italy.

" I know," he said to Signor Crispi, a few days after his accession, " I know all the responsibilities of my station and I would not presume to think that I can remedy the present difficulties with my own unaided strength. But I am convinced that those difficulties all spring from one cause. In Italy, there are few citizens who perform their duty strictly : there is too much indolence, too much laxity. Italy is at a serious turning-point in her history : she is eaten up with politics; she must absolutely direct her energies towards the development of her economic resources. Her industries will save her by improving her financial position and employing all the hands at present lying idle in an inactivity that has lasted far too long. I shall practise what I preach by scrupulously following my trade as king, by encouraging initiative and especially by encouraging the social and economic evolution of the country."

Let me do him this justice : he has kept his promises. A powerful will soon made itself conspicuous under that frail exterior. He applied to the consideration of every subject the ardour of an insatiable curiosity and his wish to know things correctly and thoroughly. He studied the confused conditions of Italian parliamentary life with as much perseverance as the social question. It is possible that, by democratizing the monarchy, he has forestalled popular movements which, in a country so passionate in its opinions and so exuberant in their manifestation as Italy, might have caused irreparable disorders and delayed the magnificent progress of the nation.

Pondering over these serious problems, his vigilant and studious mind sought relaxation and, at times, consolation and encouragement for its rough task in the ever-smiling intimacy of the home. It resolved that this home should be impenetrable to others, so impenetrable that it excluded the sovereign and *a fortiori* his official "set": the husband and father alone are admitted. This is the secret of that close union which has made people say of the Italian royal couple that they represent the perfect type of a middle-class household which has found its way by accident into a king's palace.

I have tried to give a psychological picture of the two sovereigns, arising from the impressions which I picked up in the course of my trip to Italy. Their visit to Paris was destined to confirm its accuracy and to complete its details.

3

I little thought, on the afternoon when I caught so unexpected a glimpse of Queen Helena in a Milan glove-shop, that, two years later, I was to have the honour of attending both Her Majesty and the King during their journey to France. It was their first visit to Paris in state; and our government attached considerable importance to this event, which accentuated the scope of what Prince von Bülow, at that time chancellor of the German Empire, called, none too good-humouredly, Italy's "little waltz" with France.

The letter of appointment which I received at the beginning of October 1903 directed me to go at once and await our guests at the Italian frontier and to bring them safely to Paris. It was pitch-dark, on a cold, wet night, when the royal train steamed out of the Mont-Cenis tunnel and pulled up at the platform of the frontier-station of Modane, where I had been pacing up and down for over an hour. My curiosity was stimulated, I must confess, by the recollection of the episode in the Galleria Vittorio-Emmanuele at Milan. Amused by the chance which was about to bring me face to face with "the lady of the gloves," I was longing to know if my first impressions were correct and if the features which I had conjectured, rather than perceived, behind the blue veil were really those which I should soon be able to view in the full light.

The blinds of the eight royal railway-carriages were lowered; not a sign betrayed the presence of living beings in the silent train. After a long moment, a carriage-door opened and a giant, in a long, pale-grey cavalry cloak and a blue forage-cap braided with scarlet piping and adorned with a gold tassel, stepped out softly and, making straight for me, said :

" Hush ! They are asleep."

It was two o'clock in the morning. The first official reception had been arranged to take place at Dijon, where we were due to arrive at nine o'clock. I took my seat in the train and we started. Not everybody was asleep. In the last carriage, which was reserved for the servants, a number of maids, wrapped in those beautiful red shawls which you see on the quays at Naples, were chattering away, with the greatest animation, in Italian. The echoes of that musical and expressive language reached the compartment in which I was trying to doze and called up memories of my childhood in my old Corsican heart.

It was broad daylight and we were nearing Dijon, when Count Guicciardini, the King's master of the horse, came to fetch me to present me to the sovereigns.

Two black, grave, proud and gentle eyes; a forehead framed in a wealth of dark hair; beautiful and delicate features; a smile that produced two little dimples on either side of the mouth; a tall, slight figure : I at once recognized the lady of Milan in the charming sovereign, stately and shy, who came stepping towards me. It was the same little white hand that she put out again, this time, however, that I might press upon it the homage of my respectful welcome. Should I recall the incident of the gloves ? I had it on my lips to do so. . . . I was afraid of appearing ridiculous: of course, she would not remember. . . . I said nothing.

"Delighted, M. Paoli, delighted to know you!" exclaimed the King, fixing me with his piercing eyes and shaking me vigorously by the hand.

"Sir . . ."

"But stay: Paoli is an Italian name!"

"Very nearly, Sir: I am a Corsican."

"A fellow-countryman of Napoleon's, then? I congratulate you!"

Our conversation, that morning, was confined to these few words. From Dijon onwards, the journey assumed an official character; and I lost sight of the King and Queen amid the crowd of glittering uniforms. However, a few minutes before our arrival at Paris, I surprised them both standing against a window-pane, the Queen in an exquisite costume of pale-grey velvet and silk, the King in the uniform of an Italian general, with the broad ribbon of the Legion of Honour across his chest. While watching the landscape, they exchanged remarks that appeared to me to be of an affectionate nature.

Meanwhile, a sedate footman entered and discreetly placed upon the table, behind the sovereigns, an extraordinary object that attracted my eyes. It looked like an enormous bird buried in its feathers: it was at one and the same time resplendent and voluminous. I came closer and then saw that it was a helmet, just a helmet, covered with feathers of fabulous dimensions.

And, indeed, I was not the only one to be astonished at the imposing proportions of this head-dress: whenever the King donned it in Paris, it achieved a huge success; it towered above the crowds, the livery-servants' cockades, the soldiers' bayonets; it became the target of every kodak.

The Queen's shyness? The occasion soon offered to observe it; in fact, that solemn entry into Paris was enough to make any young woman, queen or no queen, shy. The authorities wished to make the greatest effect possible and sent the procession down the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne and the Champs-Élysées. No doubt, the charming sovereign was deeply impressed and a little bewildered; but the warmth of the welcome, the heartiness of the cheering afforded her, as well as her consort, a visible pleasure; and, from that very first day, she was full of pretty thoughts and he of generous movements. At a certain moment, she took a rose from a bouquet of *roses de France* which she was carrying and gave it to a little girl who had thrust herself close to the carriage. He, on the other hand, walked straight to the colours of the battalion of zouaves who were presenting arms in the courtyard of the Foreign Office and raised to his lips the folds of the standard on which were inscribed two names dear to Italian hearts and French memories alike: Magenta and Solferino.

The Foreign Office was turned into a royal palace for the occasion of this visit. While the government had endeavoured to decorate in the most sumptuous possible style the apartments which the King and Queen of Italy were to occupy on the first floor, Mme. Delcassé, the wife of the foreign minister, on her side, did her best to relieve the somewhat cold and solemn appearance of the rooms. With this object, she procured photographs of the little Princesses Yolanda and Mafalda and placed them in handsome frames on the Queen's dressing-table. The Queen was greatly touched by the delicate attention. On entering the room, she uttered a spontaneous exclamation that betrayed all a mother's fondness :

"Oh, the children ! How delightful !"

The children ! How often those words returned to her lips during her stay in Paris ! She spoke of them incessantly, she spoke of them to everybody, to Madame Loubet, to Madame Delcassé, to the Italian ambassadress, even to the two French waiting-maids attached to her service :

"Yolanda, the elder, with her black hair and her black eyes is like me," she would explain. "Mafalda, on the other hand, is the image of her father. They both have such good little hearts."

Her maternal anxiety was also manifested in the impatience with which she used to wait for news of the princesses. Every evening, when she returned to the Foreign Office after a day of drives and visits in different parts of Paris, her first words were :

"My wire ?"

And, a little nervously, she opened the telegram that was dispatched to her daily from San Rossone, where "the children" were, and greedily read the bulletin of reassuring news which it contained.

On the morning of her arrival, she rang for a maid as soon as she woke up :

"I have an old friend in Paris," she said, "whom I want to see; it is my old French mistress, Mlle. E——. She lives on the Quai Voltaire : please have her sent for."

An attaché hastened off at once and, in half-an-hour, returned triumphantly with Mlle. E——, a charming old lady who had once been governess to Princess Helena of Montenegro at Cettinje. She had not seen her for ten years; and the reader can imagine her surprise and her confusion. The mistress and pupil threw themselves into each other's arms. And, when Mlle. E—— persisted in addressing the Queen as "Your Majesty," the latter interrupted her and said :

"Why 'Your Majesty'? Call me Helena, as you used to do."

The authorities, conforming to royal usage, had considered it the proper thing to prepare two distinct suites of rooms, one for the King and one for the Queen, separated by an enormous drawing-room. Great was our surprise when, on the following morning, the rumour ran through the passages of the Foreign Office that the King's bedroom had remained untenanted. Had he found it uncomfortable? Did he not like the room? Every one began to be anxious and it was felt that the mystery must be cleared up. I therefore went to one of the officers of the royal suite, took him aside and, while talking of "other things," tried to sound him as to the King's impressions:

"Is His Majesty pleased with his apartments?"

"Delighted."

"Was there anything wrong with the heating arrangements?"

"No, nothing."

"Perhaps the King does not care for the bed provided for His Majesty's use? I hear it is very soft and comfortable, in addition to being historic."

"Not at all, not at all; I believe His Majesty thought everything perfect."

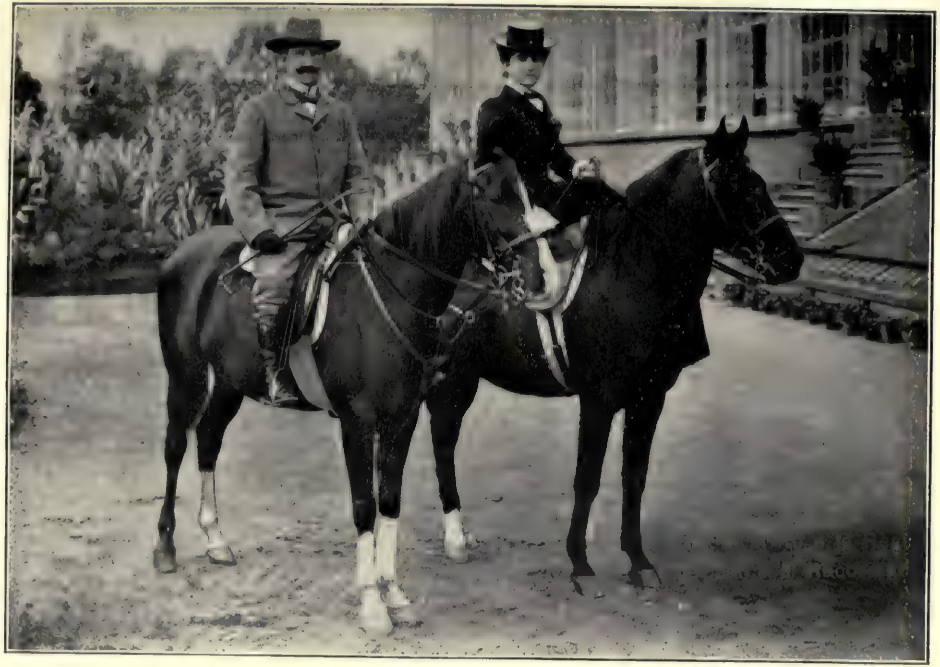
Alas, I felt that my hints were misunderstood! I must needs speak more directly. Without further circumlocution, therefore, I said:

"The fact is, it appears that the King did not deign to occupy his apartments."

The officer looked at me and smiled:

"But the King never leaves the Queen!" he exclaimed. "With us, married couples seldom have separate rooms, unless when they are on bad terms. And that is not the case here!"

The pair were never parted, in fact, except at early breakfast. The King was accustomed to take *café au lait*, the Queen chocolate: the first was



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served in the small sitting-room where the King, already dressed in his general's uniform, went through his letters; the second in the boudoir, where the Queen, in a pink-surat dressing-gown trimmed with lace, devoted two hours, after her toilet, each morning, to her correspondence, or to the very feminine pleasure of trying on frocks and hats.

I twice again had the honour of seeing her shopping, as on a former famous occasion; but this time I accompanied her in the course of my professional duties. She bought no gloves, but made up for it by purchases of linen, jewels, numerous knick-knacks and toys; and one would have thought that she was buying those china dolls, with their tiny sets of tea-things, for herself, so great was the child-like joy which she showed in their selection :

" This is for Yolanda, this is for Mafalda," she said, as she pointed to the objects that were to be placed on one side.

I saw her for the first time grave and thoughtful at the palace at Versailles, which she and the King visited in the company of M. and Mme. Loubet. I think that she must have retained a delightful recollection of this excursion to the palace of our kings, an excursion which left a lively impression on my own mind. It seemed as though Nature herself had conspired to accentuate its charm. The ancestral park was shrouded in the soft rays of the expiring autumn : the trees crowned their sombre tops with a few belated leaves of golden brown; the distances were mauve, like lilac in April; and the breeze that blew from the west scattered the water of the fountains and changed it into feathery tufts of spray.

The sovereigns, escorted by the keeper of the palace, first visited the State apartments, stopping for some time before the portraits of the princes and princesses of the House of France. And, in those great rooms filled with so many precious memories, Queen Helena listened silently and eagerly to the keeper's explanations. She lingered more particularly in the private apartments of Marie-Antoinette, where the most trifling objects excited her curiosity: obviously her imagination as a woman and a queen took pleasure in this feminine and royal past. Sometimes, obeying a discreet and spontaneous impulse, when the overpowering memory of some tragic episode weighed too heavily upon our silent thoughts, she pressed herself timidly against the King, as a little girl might do. And once we heard her whisper:

"Ah, if 'things' could speak!"

4

And the King? The King, while appreciating, as an expert, the archæological beauties which we had to show him and the imperishable evidences of our history, did not share the Queen's enthusiasm for our artistic treasures. When coming to Paris, he had looked forward to two principal pleasures: seeing our soldiers and visiting the Musée Monétaire, or collection of coins at our national mint.

As is well known, Victor Emanuel is considered —and rightly so—an exceedingly capable numismatist. He is very proud of his title as honorary president of the Italian Numismatical Society and, in 1897, undertook the task of drawing up the catalogue of the authentic old coinages of Italy. He derived the necessary materials for his work from his own collection, which at that time consisted of about forty thousand pieces. Of the two hundred and sixty types of Italian coinage known, barely one half could lay claim to absolute genuineness; and the work which he had to perform in bringing them together, completing and authenticating them was no light one.

A rather interesting story is told of the manner in which the King, when still little more than a child, acquired a taste for the science of numismatics. One day, he received a *soldo* bearing the head of Pope Pius IX., which he kept. A little later, finding another, he added it to the first; and, in this way, he ended by collecting fifteen. Meanwhile, his father, King Humbert, had presented him with some sixty pieces of old copper money; and he thus formed the nucleus of his collection.

Thenceforward, at every anniversary, on his birthday, at Christmas, at Easter, the different members of the royal family, who used to chaff him about his new passion, gave him coins or medals. He made important purchases on his own account; and, finally, in 1900, he doubled the dimensions of his collection at one stroke by buying the inestimable treasure of coins belonging to the Marchese Marignoli, which was on the point of being dispersed.

He admits, nevertheless, that the piece that represents the highest value in his eyes is a gold Montenegrin coin struck in the early days of the Petrovich dynasty and presented to him by Princess Helena of Montenegro at the time of their engagement. This coin is so rare that only one other specimen is known to exist: it is in the numismatical gallery at Vienna.

The King, moreover, has lately enriched his collection with an exceedingly rare series of coins of the Avignon popes. They were sold at auction at Frankfort; and a spirited contest took place between buyers acting respectively on behalf of King Victor Emanuel, the Pope and the director of our own gallery of medals.

It was, therefore, with a very special interest that he visited our mint, whose collection is famed throughout Europe. The director, knowing that he had to do with a connoisseur, had taken a great deal of trouble; in fact, I believe that he intended to "stagger" the King with his erudition. But he reckoned without his host, or rather his guest; and, instead of the expert dazzling the King, it was the King who astonished the expert. He surprised him to such good purpose, with the accuracy and extent of his information on the subject of coins, that the learned director had to own himself beaten :

" We are schoolboys beside Your Majesty," he confessed, in all humility.

And I think that this was something more than a courtier's phrase.

The King, as I have said, takes a keen interest in military matters. He displayed it on the occasion of the review of the Paris garrison. He had appeared bored at the concert at the Élysée on the previous evening, but made up for it now by his obvious enjoyment of the impressive spectacle which we were able to provide for him on the drill-ground at Vincennes. He wished to ride along the front of the troops on horseback and had brought with him from Italy, for this purpose, his own saddle, a very handsome and richly-caparisoned military saddle. The Governor of Paris having lent him a charger, he proved himself a first-rate horseman, for the animal, unnerved at having to carry a harness heavier than that to which it was accustomed, could hit upon nothing better than to make a show of ill-temper, regardless of the august quality of its rider. It was the worst day's work that that horse ever did in its life; and it had to recognize that it had found its master.

After making a thorough inspection of the troops, by the side of the minister for war, the King expressed a desire to examine the outfit of one of the soldiers; and a private was ordered to fall out of the ranks. Victor Emanuel took up the soldier's knapsack, handled it, looked through it and made a movement as though to buckle it to the man's shoulders again himself, whereat the worthy little *pioupiou,* quite scared and red with dismay, cried :

" Oh, no, thanks, *mon . . . mon.*"

But the poor fellow, who had never even spoken to a general, had no notion how to address a king.

Thereupon the King, greatly amused, made a charming reply :

" Call me what your forbears, the French soldiers in 1859, called my grandfather on the night of the battle of Palestro; call me *mon caporal !* "

Victor Emanuel has too practical and matter-of-fact a mind to be what is called a man of sentiment. Nevertheless, I saw him betray a real emotion when he was taken, on the following day, to visit the tomb of Napoleon I. The tomb was surrounded by six old pensioners carrying lighted torches. There were but few people there; the fitful flames of the torches cast their fantastic gleams upon the imperial sarcophagus; and the invisible presence of the Great Conqueror hovered over us : it seemed as though he would suddenly rise bodily out of that yawning gulf that coffin of marble, dressed in his grey overcoat and his immemorial hat.

During a long silence, the King stood and dreamt, with bowed head. When we left the chapel, he was dreaming still.

I had another striking picture of Victor Emanuel III. during the day's shooting with which M. Loubet provided him in the preserves at Rambouillet. The King, whose love of sport equals his passion for numismatics, is a first-rate shot. He aims at a great height, is careful of his cartridges and rarely misses a bird. According to custom, he was followed at Rambouillet by a keeper carrying a second gun, ready loaded, of course.

Now it happened that the King, seeing a flight of pheasants, began by discharging both barrels and bringing down a brace of birds. He then took the other gun, which the keeper held ready for him, put it to his shoulder and pulled the trigger : both shots missed fire. The keeper had forgotten to load the gun! Picture the rage of the sovereign, who, disconsolate at losing his pheasants, began to rate the culprit soundly! The unfortunate keeper, feeling more dead than alive, did not know what excuse to make; and he looked upon his place as fairly lost.

Then the King, guessing the man's unspoken fears, abruptly changed his tone :

" Never mind," he said. " There's no forgiving you; but I shall not say anything about it."

The King was obviously delighted with his day's sport. Yet, among the many attentions which we paid our guests during their brief stay in Paris, one surprise which we prepared for them was, if I am not mistaken, more acceptable to them—and especially to the Queen—than any other. This surprise consisted in the recital before Their Majesties, by our great actress, Mme. Bartet, of the Comédie Française, of an unpublished poem from the pen of . . . the Queen herself.

Helena of Montenegro had been a poet in her leisure hours. At the time of her engagement, she wrote a fragment in Russian which she sent to a St. Petersburg magazine, under the pseudonym of "Blue Butterfly"; and the magazine printed it without knowing the author's real name. It was written in rhythmical prose; and I was fortunate enough to secure a copy of the translation:

"VISION

"The mother said to her daughter:

"'Wouldst know how the world is made? Open thine eyes.'

"And the little maid opened her eyes. She saw lordly and towering mountains, she saw valleys full of delights, she saw the sun which shines upon and gilds all things, she saw twinkling stars and the deep billows of the sea, she saw torrents with foaming waters and flowers with varied perfumes, she saw light-winged birds and the golden sheaves of the harvest. Then she closed her eyes.

" And then she saw, she saw the fairest thing upon this earth: the image of the beloved who filled her heart, the image of the beloved who shone within her soul, the image of the beloved who gave his love in return for the love that was hers."

This charming fragment had been discovered by a collector of royal poetry some time before the visit of the Italian sovereigns. It was transposed into French verse; and M. Loubet delicately caused it to be recited to our hosts in the course of a reception given in their honour at the Élysée. That evening, the beautiful Queen enjoyed a twofold success, as a woman and a poet.

5

The unpretending affability of the royal couple was bound to win the affections of the French people. The cheers that greeted them in their drives through Paris increased in enthusiasm from day to day and proved that they had conquered all hearts.

" It is astonishing," said an Italian official to me, " but they are even more popular here than at home ! "

" That must be because they show themselves more," I replied.

At the risk of disappointing the reader, I am bound to confess that no tragic or even unpleasant incident came to spoil their pleasure or their peace of mind. It appeared that the anarchist gentry were allowing themselves a little holiday.

In the absence of the conventional plot, we had, it is true, the inevitable shower of anonymous letters and even some that were signed. The Queen, alas, had done much to encourage epistolary mendicants by announcing her wish that replies should be sent to all letters asking for assistance and that, in every possible case, satisfaction should be given to the writers. The result was that all the poverty-stricken Italians with whom Paris teems gave themselves free scope, to their hearts' content; and the usual fraternity of French begging-letter-writers—those who had formerly so artlessly striven to excite the compassion of the Shah of Persia—also tried what they could do.

But what reply was it possible to send to such letters as the following ?—

" *To Her Majesty the Queen of Italy.*

" MADAM,

" We are a young married couple, honest, but poor. We were unable to have a honeymoon, for lack of money. It would be our dream to go to Italy, which is said to be the land of lovers. We thought that Your Majesty, loving your husband as you do and, therefore, knowing what love means, might consent to help us to make this little journey. We should want five hundred francs: we entreat Your Majesty to lend it to us. When my husband has a better situation—he is at present an assistant in a curiosity-shop—he will not fail to repay Your Majesty the money.

"Pray, Madam, accept the thanks of
"Your Majesty's respectful and grateful servant,
"MARIE G——,
"*Poste Restante* 370, PARIS."

"*To His Majesty the King of Italy.*

"SIR,

"I am a young painter full of ambition and said to be not devoid of talent. I am very anxious to see Rome and to study its artistic masterpieces. Not possessing the necessary means, I am writing to ask if you would not give me an employment of any kind, even in the service of the royal motor-cars (for I know how to drive a motor), so that I may be enabled, in my spare time, to visit the monuments and picture-galleries and to perfect myself in my art.

"Pray accept, etc.,
"LOUIS S——,
"*at the Café du Capitole*, TOULOUSE."

Here is a letter of another description :

" *To Her Majesty Queen Helena.*

" Madam,

" You are the mother of two pretty babies : for this reason, I have the honour of sending you herewith two boxes of lacteal farinaceous food, of my own invention, for infants of tender years. It is a wonderful strengthening and tonic diet, and I feel that I am doing Your Majesty a service in sending you these samples. You are sure to order more.

" In the hope of receiving these orders, I am,
" Your Majesty's respectful servant,
" Dr. F. J.,
" *Rue de la Liberté*, Nîmes."

These few specimens of correspondence will suffice to give an idea of the harmless and sometimes comical literature that found its way every morning into the royal letter-bag. I must not, however, omit to mention, among the humorous incidents that marked the sovereign's journey, an amusing mistake which occurred on the day of their arrival in Paris.

It was about half-past six in the evening. Our royal guests had that moment left the Foreign Office, to pay their first official visit to the President of the Republic, when a cab stopped outside the strictly-guarded gate. An old gentleman, very tall, with a long white beard and very simply dressed, alighted and was about to walk in with a confident step.

Three policemen rushed to prevent him :

" Stop ! " they cried. " No one is allowed in here."

" Oh," said the stranger, " but I want to see the King of Italy ! "

" And who may you be ? "

" The King of the Belgians."

They refused to believe him. When he persisted, however, they went in search of an official, who at once came and proffered the most abject apologies. Picture the faces of the policemen !

As I have said, the King and Queen of Italy stayed only three days in Paris.

" We will come back again," the Queen promised, when she stepped into the train, radiant at the reception which had been given her.

They have not returned so far.

CHAPTER VI

GEORGE I. KING OF THE HELLENES

1

In one of the drawers of my desk lies a bundle of letters which I preserve carefully, adding to it, from time to time, as each fresh letter arrives. They are written in a neat and dainty hand, almost like a woman's; the paper is of very ordinary quality and bears no crown nor monogram; and the emblem stamped on the red wax with which the envelopes are sealed looks as though it had been selected on purpose to baffle indiscreet curiosity: it represents a head of Minerva wearing her helmet.

And yet this correspondence is very interesting; and I believe that an historian would set great store by it, not only because it would supply him with valuable particulars concerning certain events of our own time, but also because it reveals the exquisite feeling of one of the most attractive of sovereigns, the youthfulness of his mind, and the reasons why a royal crown may sometimes seem heavy even under the radiant skies of Greece.

It is nearly twenty years since I first met the

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THE KING OF THE HELLENES IN THE RUE DE RIVOLI.

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writer of those letters, the King of the Hellenes; and, since then, I have watched over his safety on the occasion of most of his visits to France. This long acquaintance enabled me to win his gracious kindness, while he has my affectionate devotion. I often take the liberty of writing to him, when he is in his own dominions; he never fails to reply with regularity; and our correspondence forms, as it were, a sequel to our familiar talks, full of good-humour and charm, begun at Aix-les-Bains, in Paris, or in the train.

It would be making a childish remark to say that King George loves France: the frequency of his visits makes the fact too obvious. He does more than evince a warm admiration for our country: this Danish prince, who has worn the Greek crown for over eight-and-forty years, is, as was his late brother-in-law, King Edward VII., the most Parisian of our foreign guests. His Parisianism shows itself not only in the elegant ease with which he speaks our language: it is seen in his turn of mind, which is essentially that of the man-about-town, and in his figure, which is slender and strong, tall and graceful, like that of one of our cavalry-officers. The quick shrewdness that lurks behind his fair, military moustache is also peculiarly French; and the touch of fun which is emphasized by a constant twitching of the eyes and lips, and which finds an outlet in felicitous phrases and unexpected sallies, is just of the sort that makes people say of *us* that we are the most satirical people on the face of the earth.

King George's "fun," at any rate, is never cruel; and, if his chaff sometimes becomes a little caustic, at least it is always, if I may say so, to the point.

For instance, at the commencement of his reign, when he found himself grappling with the first internal difficulties, one of the leaders of the parliamentary opposition, which was very anxious for the fall of the ministry so that it might itself take office, came to him and said, with false and deceitful melancholy:

"Ah, Sir, if you only had a minister!"

"A minister?" replied the King, with feigned surprise. "Why, I have seven at least!"

The King was brought up in the admirable school of simplicity, rectitude and kindness of his father, King Christian, and familiarized, from his early youth, with all the tortuous paths of the political maze. When the fall of King Otho placed him, by the greatest of accidents, on the throne of Greece, he brought with him not only the influence of his numberless illustrious alliances and the fruits of a timely experience gained in that marvellous observation-post which the court of Denmark supplies: he also brought the qualities of his frigid and well-balanced northern temperament to that nation which does not require the stimulant of its Patras wine to become hot-headed.

And what difficult times the King has passed through!

The King of Saxony, visiting Corfu one day, said to him, the next morning:

" Upon my word, it must be charming to be king of this paradise! "

" You must never repeat that wish," replied King George, without hesitation. " I have been its king for thirty years; and I speak as one who knows! "

Events that have followed since have amply justified the bitterness of this outburst, which I find renewed in the King's letters. And yet, grave though the situation has been of recent years, I do not believe that the Greek crown is in danger. The Greeks, without distinction of party, recognize the great services their ruler has rendered to the national cause, which he has guarded for the past ten years in the European *chancelleries* with indefatigable zeal and eloquence.

" I never met a more persuasive nor an abler diplomatist," said M. Clémenceau, last year, after a visit which he had received from George I.

His ability has not only consisted in guarding his country against the ambitious projects of Turkey by placing her under the protection of the Powers interested in preserving the *status quo* in the east; it has been proved by the ease with which he effects his ends amid the party quarrels that envenom political life in Greece. Guided by his native common-sense and a remarkable knowledge of mankind, he has made it his study, in governing, to let people do and say what they please, at least to an extent that enables him never to find himself in open opposition to the love of independence and the easily-offended self-respect of his subjects; and he has realized that what was required was an uncommon readiness to give way, rather than inflexible principles.

For the rest, it must be admitted that, although the Greek nation is sometimes tiresome and endowed with faults and weaknesses which are purely racial and temperamental, on the other hand it is generous and impulsive to a degree; and its touchy pride is only the effect of an ardent patriotism which is sometimes manifested in the most amusing ways.

For instance, when Greece, not long ago, revived an ancient and picturesque tradition and decided to restore the Olympic Games and when it became evident that these would draw large numbers of foreigners to Athens, the pickpockets held a meeting and pledged themselves, one and all, to suspend hostilities as long as the games lasted, in order to protect the reputation of the country. They even took care to inform the public of the resolution which they had passed; and they did more: they kept their word, with this unprecedented result, that the police had a holiday, thanks to the strike of the thieves!

A year or two ago, Mme. Jacquemaire, a daughter of M. Clémenceau, then prime minister of France, made a journey to Greece. Returning by rail from Athens to the Piræus, where she was to take ship for Trieste, she missed her travelling-bag, containing her jewels. This valuable piece of luggage had evidently been stolen; and she lost no time in lodging a complaint with the harbour-police, although she was convinced of the uselessness of the step. The quest instituted was, in fact, vain. But, meanwhile, the press had seized upon the incident and stirred up public opinion, which was at that time persuaded that M. Clémenceau, whose Philhellenic leanings are notorious, had promised the Greek government his support in its efforts to obtain the annexation of Crete. The daughter of the man upon whom the Greeks based such hopes as these must not, people said, be allowed to take an unfavourable impression of Greek hospitality away with her. The newspapers published strongly-worded articles, entreating the unknown thief, if he was a Greek, to give up the profits of his larceny and to perform a noble and unselfish act; placards posted on the walls of Athens and the Piræus made vehement appeals to his patriotism. Twenty-four hours later, the police received the bag and its contents untouched; and they were restored to Mme. Jacquemaire on her arrival at Trieste.

2

The pilot's trade is a hard one when you have to steer through continual rocks, to keep a constant eye upon a turbulent crew, and to look out for the "squalls" which are perpetually beating from the always stormy horizon in the east. It is easily understood that King George should feel a longing, when events permit, to go to other climes in search of a short diversion from his absorbing responsibilities.

"You see," King Leopold of the Belgians said to me, one day, "our real rest lies in forgetting who we are."

And yet it cannot be said the distractions and the rest which King George knew that he would find among us were the only object of the journeys across Europe which he made annually until the year before last. He always carried a diplomatist's dispatch-box among his luggage; he is one of those whose believe that a sovereign can travel for his country while travelling for pleasure:

"I am my own ambassador," he often said to me.

The King used to come to us generally at the beginning of the autumn, on his way to and from Copenhagen, where he never omitted to visit his father, King Christian, and his sisters, Queen Alexandra and the Empress Marie Feodorovna. He delighted in this annual gathering, which collected round the venerable grandsire, under the tall trees of Fredensborg, the largest and most illustrious family that the world contains, a family over which the old King's ascendancy and authority remained so great that his children, were they emperors or kings, dared not go into Copenhagen without first asking his leave.

"When I am down there, I feel as if I were still a little boy," King George used to say, laughing.

In France, he was a young man. He divided his stay between Aix-les-Bains and Paris; and in Paris, as at Aix, he had but one thought in his head: to avoid all official pomp and ceremony. He would have been greatly distressed if he had been treated too obviously as a sovereign; and, when he accepted the inevitable official dinner to which the President of the Republic always invited him, he positively refused the royal salute. When at Aix, he used to yield to the necessity of attending the festivities which the authorities of that charming watering-place, where he was very popular, arranged in his honour; but only because he did not wish to wound any one's feelings, however slightly. And, when invited to go to some display of fireworks:

"Come!" he would sigh. "Another party in my honour!"

Other business detained me; and I had not the privilege of being attached to his person during his first stay at Aix. The French government sent two commissaries from Lyons to watch over his safety; and these worthy functionaries, who had never been charged with a mission of this kind before, lived in a continual state of alarm. To them, guarding a king meant never to lose sight of him, to follow him step by step like a prisoner, to spy upon his movements as though he were a felon. They ended by driving our guest mad: no sooner had he left his bedroom than two shadows fastened on his heels and never quitted him; if he went to a restaurant, to the casino, to the theatre, two stern, motionless faces appeared in front of him, four suspicious eyes peered into his least action. It was of no avail for him to try to throw the myrmidons off the scent, to look for back-doors by which to escape them: there was no avoiding them; they were always there. He made a discreet complaint and I was asked to replace them.

"You are very welcome," he said, when I arrived. "Your colleagues from Lyons made such an impression on me that I ended by taking myself for an assassin!"

To my mind, the mission of guarding this particularly unaffected and affable king was neither a very absorbing nor a very thankless task. At Aix, where he walked about from morning to night like any ordinary private person, everybody knew him. There was never the least need for me to consult the reports of my inspectors; the saunterers, the shopkeepers, the peasants made it their business to keep me informed:

"Monsieur le Roi," they would say, "has just passed this way; he went down that turning."

Then I would see a familiar form twenty yards ahead, stick in hand, Homburg hat on one ear, the slim, brisk figure clad in a light-grey suit, strolling down the street, or looking into a shop-window, or stopping in the midst of a group of workmen. It was " Monsieur le Roi."

" Monsieur le Roi " had even become " Monsieur Georges " to the pretty laundresses whom he greeted with a pleasant "Good-morning" when he passed them at their wash-tubs on his way to the bathing establishment. For he carefully followed the cure of baths and douches which his trusty physician, Dr. Guillard, prescribed for his arthritis. He left the hotel early every morning and walked to the baths, taking a road that leads through one of the oldest parts of Aix. The inhabitants of that picturesque corner came to know him so well by sight that they ended by treating him as a friendly neighbour. Whenever he entered the Rue du Puits-d'Enfer, the street-boys would stop playing and receive him with merry cheers, to which he replied by flinging handfuls of coppers to them. The news of his approach flew from door to door till it reached the laundry. . . Forthwith, the girls stopped the rhythmic beat of their " dollies "; the songs ceased on their lips; they quickly wiped the lather from their hands on a corner of their skirts or aprons and came out of doors, while their fresh young voices gave him the familiar greeting :

" Good-morning, M. Georges ! Three cheers for M. Georges ! "

They chatted for a bit; the King amused himself by asking questions, joking, replying; then, touching the brim of his felt hat, he went his way, with the bright voices calling after him, prettily :

" *Au revoir*, M. Georges ! . . . Till to-morrow ! "

He enjoyed this morning call before getting into the " deep bath " reserved for him ; and he himself was popular in and around the laundry in the Rue du Puits-d'Enfer, not only because of his good-nature and good-humour, but because the girls had more than once experienced the benefits of his unostentatious generosity.

His days at Aix, as in Paris, were regulated with mathematical precision : George I. is a living chronometer. After making his daily pilgrimage to the baths, he returned to the hotel, read his telegrams, dipped into the French and English newspapers and worked with his master of the household, Count Cernovitz, or with his equerry, General de Reineck, or else with M. Delyanni, the deeply-regretted Greek minister to Paris, whom he honoured with a great affection and who always joined his royal master at Aix-les-Bains.

From eleven to twelve in the morning, he generally gave audiences, either to the authorities of Aix, with whom he maintained cordial relations, or to strangers of note who were presented to him during his stay. When he kept a few people to lunch—which often happened—they had to resign themselves to leaving their appetite unsatisfied. The King ate very little in the daytime and not only ordered a desperately frugal menu, but himself touched nothing except the *hors-d'œuvre.* His visitors naturally thought themselves obliged, out of deference, to imitate his example, the more so as, otherwise, they ran the risk of having their mouths full at the moment when they had to reply to the King's frequent questions. His regular guests, therefore, the prefect and the mayor, knowing by experience what was in store for him, had adopted a system which was both practical and ingenious: whenever they were invited to the royal table, they lunched before they came.

In the evening, on the other hand, His Majesty made a hearty meal. He always dined in the public room of the restaurant of the Casino, with his medical adviser and some friends; and, when Dr. Guillard cried out against the excessive number of courses which the royal host was fond of ordering:

"Don't be angry with me," he replied. "I don't order them for myself, but for the good of the house: if the restaurant didn't make a profit out of me, where would it be?"

After dinner, he took us with him either to the gaming-rooms or to the theatre. Although the King did not play himself, it amused him to stroll round the tables, to watch the expression of the gamblers and to observe the numberless typical incidents that always occur among such a cosmopolitan crowd as that consisting of the frequenters of our watering-places. He also loved to hear the gossip of the place, to know all about the petty intrigues, the little domestic tragedies

Lastly, he liked making the acquaintance of any well-known actor or actress who happened to be passing through Aix.

But our guest did more than show his liking for the shining lights of the profession: he numbered friends also among the humbler performers at the Grand Théâtre. Sabadon, the good, jolly, indescribable Sabadon, who for twenty years had sung first "heavy bass" at the theatre of the town, was one of them. This is how I discovered the fact: when the King came to Aix, some years ago, Sabadon shouldered his way to the front row of the spectators who were waiting outside the station to see His Majesty arrive. The enthusiastic crowd kept on shouting, "Long live King George!" and Sabadon, with his powerful voice—his "heavy bass" voice—which had filled all the "grand theatres" in the provinces, Sabadon, with his southern accent (he was from Toulouse), shouted louder than all the rest and, so that he might shout more freely, had taken a step forward.

But a policeman was watching; and fearing lest the royal procession should be disturbed by this intrusive person, he walked up to him and, in a bullying tone, said:

"Get back; and look sharp about it. You don't imagine that you're going to stand in the King's road, do you?"

Sabadon, who is a hot-blooded fellow, like all the men from his part of the country, was about to reply with one of those forcible and pungent outbursts which are the very salt of the Gascon speech :

" You low, rascally . . . " he began.

But he had no time to finish. The King appeared at the entrance to the railway-station, came across and, as he passed, said :

" Hullo, M. Sabadon ! How do you do, M. Sabadon ? Are they 'biting' this year ? "

" Yes, Sir, Your Majesty. And your family ? Keeping well, I hope ? That's right ! "

Then, when the King had disappeared, Sabadon turned to the astounded policeman :

" What do you say to that, my son ? Flabbergasts you, eh ? "

How did the King come to know the singer ? And why had he asked with so much interest if " they were 'biting' this year ? " One of the local papers reported the incident and supplied the explanation, which I did not trouble to verify, but which is so amusing and, at the same time, so probable that I give it for what it is worth.

The King, it seems, who often walked to the Lac du Bourget, a few miles from Aix, thought that he would try his hand at fishing, one afternoon. Taking the necessary tackle with him, he sat down on the shore of the lake and cast his line. Ten minutes, twenty minutes passed. Not a bite. The King felt the more annoyed as, thirty yards from where he was, a man—a stranger like himself—was pulling up his line at every moment, with a trout or a bream wriggling at the end of it.

The disheartened King ended by deciding to go to the angler and ask him how he managed to catch so many fish! But, before he was able to say a word, the man stood up, bowed with great ceremony and, in a stentorian voice, said:

" Sir, Your Majesty . . . "

" What! Do you know me?" asked the King.

" Sir, Your Majesty, let me introduce myself: Sabadon, second heavy bass at the Théâtre du Capitole of Toulouse, at this moment first chorus-leader at the Théâtre Municipal of Aix-les-Bains. . . . I have seen you in the stage-box."

" Ah!" said the King, taken aback. " But please explain to me why you get so many fish, whereas . . ."

" Habit, Sir, Your Majesty, a trick of the hand and personal fascination; it needs an education: I got mine at Pinsaquel, near Toulouse, at the junction of the Ariège and the Gavonne. . . . Ah, Pinsaquel!"

And Sabadon's voice was filled with all the pangs of home-sickness:

" Have you never been to Pinsaquel? You ought to go: it's the angler's paradise."

" Certainly, I will go there one day. But, meanwhile, I shall be returning with an empty basket."

" Never, not if I know it! Take my place, Sir, Your Majesty, each time I say 'Hop!' pull up your line . . . and tell me what you think of it!"

The King, mightily amused by the adventure, followed his instructions. In three minutes Sabadon's tremendous voice gave the signal :

"Hop ! "

It was a trout. And the fishing proceeded, in an almost miraculous manner.

As they walked back to the town together, an hour later, Sabadon took the opportunity to expound to the King the cause of his grudge against Meyerbeer, the composer :

"You must understand, Sir, Your Majesty, that, at the Toulouse theatre, it was I who used to play the night-watchman in the *Huguenots.* I had to cross the stage with a lantern; and, as I am very popular at Toulouse, I used to receive a wonderful ovation : 'Bravo, Sabadon ! Hurrah for Sabadon !' Just as when you came to Aix, Sir, Your Majesty. . . . Well, in spite of that, the manager absolutely refused to let me take a call, because the music didn't lend itself to it ! I ask you, Sir, Your Majesty, if that lout of a Meyerbeer couldn't have let me cross the stage a second time ! "

3

King George, who, like most reigning sovereigns, is an indefatigable walker, used to start out every day in the late afternoon and come back just before dinner-time. He nearly always took a member of his suite with him; one of my inspectors would follow him. All the peasants round Aix knew the King by sight and raised their caps as he passed. He is very young in mind—in this respect, he has remained the midshipman of his boyhood—and he sometimes amused himself by playing a trick on the companion of his walk. For instance, as soon as he saw that his equerry, after covering a reasonable number of miles, was beginning, if I may so express myself, to hang out signals of distress, the King suggested that they should turn into a roadside public-house for a drink :

" They keep a certain small wine of the country here," he said, " which has a flavour all of its own; but you must drink it down at a draught."

The other, whether he were thirsty or not, dared not refuse. They therefore entered the inn and the King had a tumbler filled with the famous nectar and handed it to his equerry, taking good care not to drink any himself. It was, in point of fact, a *piquette,* or sour wine, with a taste " all of its own " and resembling nothing so much as vinegar; and the King's guest, when he had emptied his glass, could not help pulling a frightful face. He dared not, however, be so disrespectful as to complain; and, when the King, who had enjoyed the scene enormously, asked, in a very serious voice :

" Delicious, isn't it ? "

" Oh, delicious ! " the equerry replied, with an air of conviction.

You must not, however, think that the King's practical jokes were always inhuman. Most often, they bore witness, under a superficial appearance of mischief, to his discriminating kindness of heart.

I remember, in this connection, once going to meet him at the frontier-station of Culoz, through which he was passing on his way from Geneva to Aix. The members of his suite and I had left him alone, for a few moments, while we went to buy some books and newspapers which he had asked for. As he was walking up and down the platform, he saw a good woman at the door of a third-class railway-carriage, a plump, red-faced sort of peasant-woman, who was making vain efforts to open the door and fuming with anger and impatience. Suddenly catching sight of the King, who stood looking at her :

" Hi, there, Mr. Porter ! " she cried. " Come and help me, can't you ? "

The King ran up, opened the carriage-door and received the fat person in his arms. Next, she said :

" Fetch me out my basket of vegetables and my bundle."

The King obediently executed her commands. At that moment we appeared upon the platform . . . and, to our amazement, saw King George carrying the basket under one arm and the bundle under the other. He made a sign to me not to move. He carried the luggage to the waiting-room, took a ticket for the fair traveller, who was changing her train, and refused to accept payment for it, in spite of her insistence. . . .

What a pleasant recollection she must have of the porters at Culoz Station !

Here is another adventure, which happened at Aix. The King had the habit, on leaving the Casino in the evening, to go back with me in the hotel omnibus, which was reserved for his use : he found this easier than taking a cab. One evening, just as we were about to step in, a visitor staying at the hotel, a foreign lady, not knowing that the omnibus was reserved exclusively for the King, went in before us, sat down and waited for the 'bus to start. As I was about to ask her to get out :

" Let her be," said the King. " She's not in our way."

We got inside, in our turn; I sat down opposite the King; the omnibus started; the lady did not move. Suddenly, the King broke silence and spoke to me; I replied, using, of course, the customary forms of " Sire " and " Your Majesty."

Thereupon the lady looked at us in dismay, flung herself against the window, tapped at it and called out :

" What have I done ? Heavens, what have I done ? " she cried. " I am in the King's omnibus ! Stop ! Stop ! "

And, turning to the King, with a theatrical gesture :

" Pardon, Sire."

The King was seized with a fit of laughter, in the midst of which he did his best to reassure her :

"I entreat you, madam, calm yourself! You have nothing to fear: a king is not an epidemic disease!"

The good lady quieted down; but we reached the hotel without being able to extract a word from her paralyzed throat.

In this respect, she did not resemble the majority of her sisters of the fair sex, before whose imperious and charming despotism we have bowed since the days of our father Adam. As a matter of fact, no sovereign that I know of ever aroused more affectionate curiosity in female circles than King George. The glamour of his rank had something to say to this, no doubt; but I have reason to believe that the elegance of his person, the affability of his manners, and the conquering air of his moustache were not wholly unconnected with it. Whether leaving his hotel, or entering the restaurant or one of the rooms of the Casino, or appearing in the paddock at the races, which he attended regularly, he was at once the cynosure of every pair of beaming eyes and the object of cunning manœuvres on the part of their fair owners, who were anxious to approach him and to find out what a king is made of when you see him at close quarters. No man is quite insensible to such advances. At the same time, George I. was too clever to be taken in: he was amused at the homage paid him and accepted it in his usual spirit of bantering, but polite, coyness.

For the rest, he led a very quiet, very methodical and rather monotonous life, both at Aix and in Paris; for to the character of this sovereign, as to that of most others, there is a "middle-class" side that displays itself in harmless eccentricities. For instance, King George, when he travels abroad, always goes to the same hotel, occupies the same rooms, and is so averse to change that he likes every piece of furniture to be in exactly the same place where he last left it. I shall never forget my astonishment when, entering the King's bedroom a few moments after his arrival at the Hôtel Bristol in Paris, I caught him bodily moving a heavy Louis XV. chest of drawers, which he carried across the room with the help of his physician:

"You see," he said, "it used to stand by the fire-place and they have shifted it to the window, so I am putting it back."

4

I have spoken of my duties with regard to this monarch as an agreeable sinecure. But I was exaggerating. Once, when I was with him at Aix, I had a terrible alarm. I was standing beside him, in the evening, in the *petits-chevaux* room at the Casino, when one of my inspectors slipped a note into my hand. It was to inform me that an individual of Roumanian nationality, a rabid Grecophobe, had arrived at Aix, with, it was feared, the intention of killing the King. There was no further clue.

I was in a very unpleasant predicament. I did not like to tell the King, for fear of spoiling his stay. To go just then in search of further details would have been worse still : there could be no question of leaving the King alone. How could I discover the man ? For all I knew, he was quite near; and, instinctively, I scrutinized carefully all the people who crowded round us, kept my eyes fixed on those who seemed to be staring too persistently at the King and watched every movement of the players.

At daybreak the next morning, I set to work and started enquiries. I had no difficulty in discovering my man. He was a Roumanian student and had put up at a cheap hotel; he was said to be rather excitable in his manner, if not in his language. I could not arrest him as long as I had no definite charge to bring against him. I resolved to have him closely shadowed by the Aix police; and I myself arranged never to stir a foot from the King's side. Things went on like this for several days : the King knew nothing and the Roumanian neither; but I would gladly have bought him a railway-ticket to get rid of him.

Presently, however, one of my inspectors came to me, wearing a terrified look :

" We've lost the track of the Roumanian ! " he declared.

" You are mad ! " I cried.

" No, would that I were ! He has left his hotel unnoticed by any of us; and we don't know what has become of him."

I flew into a rage and at once ordered a search to be made for him. It was labour lost: there was not a trace of him to be found.

For once, I was seriously uneasy. I resolved to tell the whole story to the King, so that he might allow himself to be quietly guarded. But he merely shrugged his shoulders and laughed:

"You see, Paoli," he said, "I am a fatalist. If my hour has come, neither you nor I can avoid it; and I am certainly not going to let a trifle of this kind spoil my holiday. Besides, it is not the first time that I have seen danger close at hand; and I assure you that I am not afraid. Look here, a few years ago, I was returning one day with my daughter to my castle of Tatoi, near Athens. We were driving without an escort. Suddenly, happening to turn my head, I saw a rifle-barrel pointed at us from the roadside, gleaming between the leaves of the bushes. I leaped up and instantly flung myself in front of my daughter. The rifle followed me. I said to myself, 'It's all over; I'm a dead man.' And what do you think I did? I have never been able to explain why, but I began to count aloud—'One, two, three'—it seemed an age; and I was just going to say, 'Four,' when the shot was fired. I closed my eyes. The bullet whistled past my ears. The startled horses ran away, we were saved and I thought no more about it. So do not let us alarm ourselves before the event, my dear Paoli: we will wait and see what happens."

I admired the King's fine coolness, of course; but I was none the easier in my mind, for all that. . . . Still, the King was right, this time, and I was wrong: we never heard anything more about the mysterious Roumanian.

5

George I. has preserved none but agreeable recollections of his different visits to Aix. In evidence of this, I will only mention the regret which he expressed to me, in one of his last letters, that the Greek crisis prevented him from making his usual trip to France in 1909:

"Here, where duty keeps me—nobody knows for how long—I often think of my friends at Aix, of my friends in France, whom I should so much like to see again; of that beautiful country, of our walks and talks. . . . But life is made up of little sacrifices: they do not count, if we succeed in attaining the object which we pursue; and mine is to ensure for my people the happiness which they deserve."

The King has depicted his very self in those few words: I know no better portrait of him.

CHAPTER VII

KING EDWARD VII

1

I CANNOT open this chapter without a feeling of the saddest emotion. Little did I think, when I was preparing to write it, that I should have to speak in the past tense of the sovereign of whom it treats!

King Edward was still at Biarritz. He had made only a short stay, of twenty-four hours, in Paris on his way to the Basque coast; and I did not have time to call and pay my respects to His Majesty, in accordance with my habit. I therefore ventured to write and tell him that it was my intention to devote a few pages of my Memoirs to him, if he authorized me to do so. With his usual kindness, he at once sent a reply to say that he would be pleased to read what I had written, when he returned through Paris, and to point out any inaccuracies that might have slipped in unawares, even as he had read my book on Queen Victoria and corrected it with his own hand. Alas! He was never to visit Paris again; politics summoned him hastily back to London, where death awaited him.

The void which he leaves behind him in Europe and, I may safely say, in the whole world is so great that I doubt if it can ever be filled in the French hearts which he had conquered by the charm of his easy good-nature, by the absolutely Latin quickness of his intellect, and by the constant and faithful friendship which he had shown us. His death came upon France almost in the light of a family loss; and it was felt as such especially by myself, for I had transferred to the son the respectful attachment which I had always borne to the mother.

When I begin to consult my reminiscences of the regretted sovereign, one memory, a very distant one, crops up at the sound of Edward VII.'s name as though it dated back to yesterday, instead of to 1877. I had just been appointed special commissary at Nice and had entered upon my functions, one morning in April, on the station platform, by watching the arrival of the express from Paris. Suddenly my attention was attracted to a traveller, followed by a great, tall footman, who was trying to reach the exit in the midst of a noisy, hurrying, cosmopolitan crowd.

The traveller was a powerfully-built, broad-shouldered man, with an expansive face tapering into a short fair beard. His features were open and prepossessing. His gait was supple and his bearing one of supreme ease under the faultless cut of his navy-blue serge suit. Everything about him pointed to a love of sober elegance and subtle refinement in dress: his skilfully-tied sailor's knot; his rich silk handkerchief, protruding slightly from the pocket of his jacket; the gold-knobbed malacca under his arm and the fragrant havana between his lips; the very pale-grey felt hat, which he wore a little to the left side of his head; his yellow-suède gloves sewn with black stitching on the backs. But what struck me most of all was the clearness of the blue-grey eyes, which were very prominent, under their heavy lids.

" You know who that is, of course ? " asked the station-master.

" I do not," said I.

" Take a good look at him, then. You will see him very often : it is the Prince of Wales."

And, as I was going to step forward to clear a road for His Royal Highness to his carriage :

" Don't do that," said the station-master, " don't do that. Your display of zeal would only annoy him. Besides, he knows everybody at Nice and everybody adores him."

I was presented to the prince the next day. The first remark he made to me was :

" We have the tomb of General Paoli, the celebrated outlaw, in Westminster Abbey, among our famous dead. He fought against England long before Corsica belonged to France. Are you a relation ? "

" He was one of my ancestors, sir."

" As you see, we have honoured his great memory. I am very glad to meet one of his descendants."

I did not suspect, at that time, that I should one day become "the official guardian of the kings," to use the expression of the King of the Hellenes. Until then, my various detective duties had been limited to keeping anarchists and other more or less suspicious persons under observation. Since the advent of the Republic, the sovereigns of Europe had forgotten their way to France; the grand-dukes had not yet taken to visiting us; princes in general were distrustful. Our patriotic self-esteem was all the more indebted to the heir to the British crown for the frequency of his visits. He had been our friend in need; and we were duly grateful to him. And we also appreciated his wonderful tact, thanks to which he was the only prince who could allow himself to lunch at the Jockey Club and dine at the Élysée, to pay calls in the Faubourg Saint-Germain and receive the visits of Gambetta, without wounding susceptibilities ever ready to take offence.

2

The fact is that no one possessed the art of differentiation and the true sense of proportion to the same extent as the Prince. It was a keyboard on which he played with incomparable skill. His way of taking off his hat, of shaking hands, his smile, the intonation of his voice, his acts, his words: all these were, if I may so express myself, accommodated with infinite delicacy to the person whom he was addressing, to the surroundings in which he found himself, to the exact meaning which he wished a given act or a given word to bear. He was more than the right man in the right place : he was the right man in every place. A fine gentleman in the strictest sense of the word, he knew how to remain a prince while stooping to intimacy and even familiarity, and to make those who might have been tempted to forget the fact remember it.

I have an evening in my mind when he was chatting in the green-room of the Comédie Française with Sara Bernhardt and Frédéric Febvre, the famous comedian. A stranger walked up to the group and, without being presented to the prince, asked him what he thought of the play. The Prince of Wales turned round quietly and, with his most pleasant smile :

" I don't think I spoke to you," he replied.

The stranger turned first red and then pale and hastened to apologize.

The Prince of Wales hated affectation, was always natural and was glad to come into touch with any one who could teach him something new, who could give him a fresh view of life, which he loved with an eager curiosity, or of society, which he studied incessantly and from which he derived an immense amount of amusement.

Respecting established institutions as he did, he never allowed himself to comment on the government or policy of a country; and none knew better than he how to turn the conversation the moment it was entering on dangerous ground.

He had retained a lively affection for our imperial family and always spoke of the Emperor Napoleon III. and the Prince Imperial in terms of emotion. He also showed the most respectful attachment for the Empress Eugénie: each time that he went to the Mediterranean when she was staying there, or if he knew her to be in Paris while he was there, he never failed to pay her one or more long visits. The majesty of that inconsolable and silent grief filled him with the deepest sympathy.

Whether or not he had a more marked predilection for the Bonapartes, this did not prevent him from keeping up a regular intercourse with the Orleans family and notably with the Duc d'Aumale:

"You see, Paoli," he said, one day, "the Duc d'Aumale is a grandee of the past who has lingered on into our own age: he represents the flower of exquisite French politeness; and his learning is so extensive and his recollection of things so accurate that, every time I talk to him, I feel as if I were having a lesson in French history."

But, though he sometimes liked to revive the charms of the past, he was better able than anybody to appreciate the interest of the present. He neglected no opportunity of becoming acquainted with the statesmen and orators of the Third Republic. He held Gambetta in high esteem :

" The first time that I saw him," he said to me, one day, " he struck me as so vulgar in his manner and so careless of his appearance that I asked myself if this was really the man who had discovered the means of exercising an irresistible fascination over the minds of crowds. Then we talked. Gambetta expounded his ideas and his plans; and the captivating charm of his eloquence made me forget the physical repulsion with which he inspired me : I was ' carried away ' in my turn, like the others. I wanted to see him again; I invited him to come to England for Ascot. Events prevented him from doing so and he died the year after. I was sorry. He was a great politician and a wonderful master of words."

On the other hand, our public men, whatever their shade of opinion, found the greatest pleasure in talking to the prince. He was not of a communicative temperament, but he was fond of discussion and he argued ably and shrewdly, contributing to his judgment of men and things a soundness of appreciation, a perspicacity and a certain attitude of philosophic doubt which are characteristic of men who, like himself, have long had the habit of seeing, learning and reasoning for themselves. Wherever he might be—in a political drawing-room, at the theatre, at the club, at the races, at a restaurant—his curiosity was always on the alert; he was eager to gather men's views, to observe their attitudes;

he spoke little, but he was very clever at making others speak; his gracious simplicity put you at your ease; his loud, jovial laugh inspired you with confidence, even as his clear eyes, when he fixed them on you with a cold stare, were enough to call you to order if you ventured to divert the conversation to too slippery a ground.

I was never attached to his service, properly speaking, until after his accession. He hated to have people bothering about him; besides, he used to arrive in Paris or at Cannes unannounced; and the police supervision exercised about his person was so discreet that he did not perceive it at all. I can remember only one attempt made against his life: this was when the famous anarchist Sipido fired a revolver at him, through the window of his railway-carriage, in Brussels, while he was passing through the station with the Princess of Wales.

In the following year, I was with the prince in the selfsame carriage—one of the *berlines* which he was in the habit of using for his journeys on the Continent—and he showed me the mark left by the bullet in a corner of the ceiling:

"Look, Paoli," he explained. "The bullet entered just here, on the right, smashing the window-pane, and, before burying itself in the wood, passed across the compartment and nearly grazed my hat. I was in serious danger that day." And, tapping me on the shoulder, he added, gracefully, "Now that would never have happened if you had been with me!"

3

His very noticeable partiality for the south of France was due not only to the country and the climate, though he appreciated their charm, but also to the life of society and sport, which offered him more satisfaction and more amusement in that exquisite setting than anywhere else. He was, in a certain sense, King of the Côte d'Azur, where nothing was decided in the matter of festivities without his approval and consent. He made Cannes his headquarters and the Cercle Nautique at Cannes his favourite residence; but his kingdom of fashion and pleasure extended beyond Nice, as far as Mentone; and all those winter-resorts competed for the honour of his visits. As a matter of fact, he contributed largely towards developing their prosperity by attracting an enormous British colony in that direction.

He even attracted Queen Victoria to the Riviera. In the course of the stays which that august sovereign made at Nice, Cannes and Mentone, I often saw the Prince of Wales. Although he did not live in the same town as the Queen, he came pretty regularly to call upon her and the other members of the royal family. I have many a time been in a position to observe the attentions which he lavished upon Queen Victoria, the very respectful deference which he showed her on all occasions and the scrupulous care with which, even on his holiday trips abroad, he fulfilled his duties as heir apparent. It became incumbent upon him, for instance, to return the visits which foreign sovereigns and princes, staying on the Riviera, never failed to pay the venerable Queen. And, as these royal visitors were very numerous, the Prince of Wales's official drudgery often took up a great deal of his time.

The King absolutely worshipped the memory of Queen Victoria, for whom, as a mother, he had felt a profound affection, and, as a queen, an intense admiration:

"My mother," he once said to me, "is one of the most remarkable politicians of the day."

For instance, he always had opposite him, on his writing-desk, a large photograph representing the Queen seated at her table, reading a document. This photograph accompanied him wherever he went, up to the day of his death: when he stayed at an hotel, even for four-and-twenty hours, it was the first object which he himself took out of his dressing-case and placed on his writing-table. On the day after the great sovereign's funeral, to which I had the honour of being invited, the prince, who had just been proclaimed king, said to me, with true emotion, taking both my hands:

"My dear Paoli, I know all the affection which my dear mother felt for you and the faithful attachment which you have always shown her; and I shall never forget it. This memory will be a new reason why you may always be sure of my sympathy and that of my family."

I had imagined that, from the day of his ascending the throne, I should have no further opportunity of seeing him. But he did not sacrifice to his new responsibilities either his old friends or his taste for travelling. It is true that, when staying on the Continent, he led a more sedentary, a more retired life than before; but he knew everything, saw everything and kept in touch with everybody whose personality interested him. He worked prodigiously, whether in the train, on board his yacht, or at the hotel; and he was remarkably skilful in combining serious matters with amusement, even as he knew how to mingle the most exquisite simplicity with that sense of professional and royal dignity with which he was so profoundly imbued.

I may say that it is during these last nine years that I have most often had the occasion and the opportunity to live in the immediate circle of Edward VII. As a matter of fact, I accompanied him on all his journeys on French soil; and I will now try to recall these more recent memories.

4

The King, although fond of travelling, liked to have everything arranged and settled beforehand. He had inherited his mother's methodical mind. He was very particular about the details of his journeys and extraordinarily clever at ensuring their comfort. As soon as he had decided upon going to the Continent—and he generally fixed the date two months in advance—he began by sending for his courier, M. Fehr. M. Fehr was the great organizer of the King's travels. He was a Swiss by birth and had begun by being a courier in the firm of Thomas Cook & Son. In this capacity, he was often entrusted with the arrangements for the journeys of the Prince of Wales, and he had the good luck to secure the prince's favour. This was the starting-point of his fortunes. The prince took him into his own service; and, when, at last, King Edward ascended the throne, M. Fehr, whose ambition had never aimed at a higher title than that of "Cook's courier," found himself raised to that of "the King's courier."

He did not lose his head in consequence of his promotion. He was a highly-intelligent, very active and wonderfully able man; and he knew how to arrange all the particulars of a journey, settle the whole programme, assume the entire responsibility and look after his royal master's interests, without neglecting a single detail. It came within his province, in fact, to choose the royal residences, to make terms with the railways, to engage the King's rooms at the hotels and to pay the bills. He was quite ready to fight the hotel-keepers when he thought that the charges had been "laid on too thick"; for the matter of that, he did not hesitate to insist on reductions that sometimes came to as much as fifty per cent. His rough appearance and loud way of talking made resistance difficult.

The King's suite, when travelling, was comparatively small. It usually consisted of two equerries and a physician. General Stanley Clarke long formed part of this little peripatetic court in his capacity of chief equerry to the King; he was latterly appointed to the office of clerk-marshal. The equerries-in-ordinary, who took it in turns to accompany His Majesty, were Colonel "Fritz" Ponsonby, the son of General Sir Henry Ponsonby, who used always to travel with Queen Victoria, Colonel Sir Arthur Davidson, Captain the Hon. Seymour J. Fortescue and the Hon. John H. Ward. As for the doctor, he was invariably that good Sir James Reid, who, with the inexhaustible gaiety that delighted the whole court, was the very personification of the jovial frankness and blunt loyalty of the Scot.

5

The staff of servants included two valets and two footmen. The first valet, M. Meidinger, was an Austrian by birth: he filled, to a certain extent, the offices of groom of the chambers and butler of the sovereign's household whenever His Majesty was travelling incognito. The King, whom he had served for eighteen years, was very much attached to him and allowed him certain familiarities. It was he who woke His Majesty every morning; and, when he entered the room, the King, still half asleep, regularly asked him the same question:

"What's the weather doing to-day, Meidinger?"

Meidinger also put out the King's things, brought him the newspapers and made sure that his royal master had everything that he wanted, for the King always dressed alone and even tied his own tie, with special care.

Hawkins, the second valet, was an Englishman : he looked after all the details to which the dignity of the first valet did not allow him to stoop. One of his chief duties was to make the royal bed. He was better acquainted than any one with the King's habits and tastes : he knew, for instance, that His Majesty's mattress must never be turned on a Friday. This was a curious superstition of the King's : it was the only one I ever knew him to cherish and he made no secret of it. By a strange coincidence, I hear that, on the morning of his death, which occurred on a Friday, the doctors, forgetting his expressed wishes amid the grave cares occasioned by the sudden alteration for the worse in his condition, ordered his mattress to be turned, hoping that this would give him a little rest after a night of pain : a few minutes before midnight, he drew his last breath. . . . I hasten to say that I have had no opportunity of checking the correctness of this particular; but I have it from a trustworthy source. On the other hand, I have ascertained—and his superstition about the mattress confirms it—that the King always had a presentiment that Friday would be a fatal day for him.

The two footmen who accompanied the King when travelling also had settled duties. One of them, Hoepfner, was a German and owed his brilliant career to his fine carriage. After being enlisted in the grenadiers of the guard of the Emperor William II., because of his tall stature, he soon passed into the service of the Grand-duke Michael of Russia, who was in want of a "show" footman and did not hesitate to rob the Kaiser's army of Hoepfner. When King Edward noticed his gigantic height and the correctness of his bearing, he took him into his service in his turn. Hoepfner waited on the sovereign at table and opened the door of the royal apartments, whereas the other footman, a British subject called Wellard, was charged exclusively with the care of His Majesty's clothes, boots and dog, an absorbing duty when we reflect that the King travelled with seventy pieces of luggage, including a countless number of Gladstone bags, and that he took with him some forty suits of clothes and over twenty pairs of boots and shoes.

There was also the dog.

Cæsar was a person of importance. This long-haired, rough-coated, white fox-terrier, with the black ears, was not exactly distinguished for the aristocratic elegance that marks Queen Alexandra's dogs, whose acquaintance I have also had the opportunity of making. Cæsar had rather what we Frenchmen call *la beauté du diable :* he had a strong personality and a quick intelligence. He was very independent in his ways, a little mischievous and playful and deeply attached to his royal master, who pampered him as one would a child. When the King was travelling, Cæsar went with him everywhere and did not leave him day or night, for he slept in an easy-chair to the right of his bed. He was present at all the King's meals and willingly accepted any bits of meat or sugar which the guests offered him. I succeeded in winning his good graces and we became first-rate friends. On the other hand, once he was out of doors, he cut all his acquaintances. Whether on the beach at Biarritz or in the Rue de la Paix in Paris, he was always seen at the King's heels, proudly displaying a collar that bore the legend, " I am Cæsar, the King's dog." And it was as though he knew it.

When Wellard, the second footman, had brushed the King's clothes and cleaned the King's boots, he proceeded to groom Cæsar; for the high favour which the terrier enjoyed compelled him to be always scrupulously clean. Every morning, he was washed and combed with care. I will not go so far as to swear that he liked it. Nevertheless, he submitted to it with resignation.

The staff of the royal journeys furthermore included the motor-mechanic, Stamper, and three chauffeurs in charge of the three motor-cars which the King took with him on the Continent. Lastly, I must not forget to mention the postmaster, whose functions consisted first of all in translating into cipher the telegrams written out by the King and, conversely, in transcribing the cipher dispatches received from London.

He, moreover, received and prepared the government dispatch-boxes which, every other day, brought papers for His Majesty to read or sign and in which the official documents were carried back to London; he also delivered the letters addressed to the members of the royal suite and staff.

I have already said that the King was in the habit of using his own railway-carriages on all the European lines. These carriages were three in number and were built, a few years ago, in the workshops of the International Sleeping Car Company. They are marked by sober elegance and refined comfort: there are no gildings or carvings or showy upholstery, as in most of the royal railway-carriages which I have known; on the other hand, there are plenty of soft easy-chairs, thick carpets and spacious cupboards. The King's smoking-carriage, fitted in Spanish leather, is a model of simple good taste. King Edward, when not travelling officially or with the Queen, generally used only one of these *berlines*, which was placed in the front of the special train.

6

I used, of course, to go to Calais to meet him. As soon as he caught sight of me, he never failed to say:

"Still young and flourishing as ever, M. Paoli?"

The King was full of indulgence for my grey hairs.

For all those whom he was accustomed to see on landing from the boat he had a pleasant word, a smile, a shake of the hand. He felt himself at home; and this sense obviously afforded him the liveliest satisfaction. During the run in the train from Calais to Paris, he nearly always sent for me to his carriage and questioned me about a number of minute facts connected with Paris life, which proved how well-informed he was of all that went on in the capital. He even knew the "takings" of certain plays which were reputed successes or "frosts."

The moment he arrived at the Hôtel Bristol, where he occupied the same suite of rooms on each of his trips, he sent for the proprietor and asked him the names of the visitors staying at the hotel, so that he might see if there were any among them whom he knew. He also had the leading Paris newspapers brought to him and at once ran his eye down the "Dramatic Notes" column before settling on the theatre which he proposed to visit that same evening. He then informed the hotel, which promptly telephoned for two boxes, on the pit tier, nearest the stage, to be thrown into one and reserved for the King's use. The hotel also generally sent down an armchair for His Majesty to sit in; for the King looked upon the chairs in our theatres as uncomfortable and was one of those who very rightly think that, to enjoy a performance properly, it is essential that one should be comfortably seated.

Edward VII. did not care much for tragedies or plays written in verse. He preferred musical comedy and, above all, modern society-pieces containing plenty of subtle and caustic psychology. One of his favourite playhouses was the Théâtre des Variétés, where, as Prince of Wales, he had so often applauded Mme. Jeanne Granier in Offenbach's operas. The last time that he went there was in 1909, to attend a performance of *Le Roi*, that amusing satire by MM. Emmanuel Arène, Robert de Flers and Gaston de Caillavet. There was even a brief reference to himself in the play; and his photograph figured prominently on a table. Accordingly, when the King announced his visit, the manager and the authors were thrown into a great state of excitement. Would the King not be annoyed at seeing himself introduced on the stage, although the allusion made to him was an entirely complimentary one? It was prudently resolved to replace his photograph with that of another monarch and his name with that of an imaginary sovereign. But the King, on hearing of this little subterfuge, resisted it forcibly. They were obliged to yield to his wishes; and, when the famous scene came on, he was the first to laugh at it, while the spectators applauded this thoroughly Parisian sense of

KING EDWARD VII. AT THE ÉLYSÉE.

KING EDWARD VII. WALKING IN PARIS.

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humour displayed by the most Parisian of our visitors.

Edward VII. always retained a small circle of friends whom he saw regularly during his visits to Paris. Those whom he gathered round his table on these occasions included the Marquis du Lau, the Marquis and Marquise de Breteuil, the Marquis and Marquise de Ganay, Mr. and Mrs. Standish, General the Marquis de Gallifet, M. Édouard Detaille, the great painter, whose studio he never failed to visit, and others. For General Gallifet, in particular, he cherished a most indulgent fellow-feeling. I say indulgent, because he allowed the general that liberty of language and frankness of opinion which constituted one of the most picturesque features in the personality of that gallant knight-errant, who was a living and most attractive personification of the heroic times and glorious idylls of old. The King loved his sparkling wit and his chivalrous character. I remember that, when he came to Paris a few months after General de Gallifet's death, he said to me, sadly :

" You see, Paoli, Gallifet's disappearance means a great deal to me. It leaves a blank. I have lost a friend whom I shall never replace."

And yet there were lively discussions between them, in 1905, in connection with Morocco. The general considered that our policy in Morocco was dangerous from the moment that our minds were not frankly made up to go to war with Germany. It is not my business to express an estimate of this opinion : I am content simply to record it. The King, I may say, never mentioned his views on the Morocco question in my presence; but his acts, in their silent and methodical development, were infinitely plainer and more eloquent than any number of words. His official journey to France, at the beginning of our difficulties with Germany, and his cruise in Moorish latitudes and along the Algerian coast, immediately after the German Emperor's visit to Tangiers, were deliberate demonstrations the significance of which was at once grasped by public opinion in France and roused the gratitude of the whole nation.

For the rest, I have often remarked that the King was thoroughly acquainted with the French character and sometimes knew even better than our own statesmen how to appreciate the real importance of things that happened in our country. I remember that, in a certain year—it was in 1907, I believe—Edward VII., who had just finished his annual cruise in the Mediterranean, announced his arrival in Paris on the 1st of May. Now the socialist unions were preparing great demonstrations in the streets for that very day. The police authorities feared that there might be disturbances in the capital. The government thereupon informed the King that it would perhaps be advisable for him to delay his coming by twenty-four hours; but the King would not hear of it.

When I went to meet him at the frontier-station of Pontarlier, with instructions to make a last effort to induce him to "avoid" Paris, he gave me a quizzical glance and said:

"So it's true, Paoli? You don't want me in Paris?"

"The fact is, Sir," I replied, "that we are afraid lest Your Majesty should be troubled by manifestations."

"In that case, you can be quite easy. There will be nothing of the sort. Threatened manifestations never take place: at the most, the people will go and picnic in the Bois de Boulogne, with their wives and families. You see, Paoli, I know your fellow-countrymen better than you do. This is not the time for revolutions and bloodshed. People shout, threaten, sing songs and go home to bed. I shall, therefore, arrive quietly in Paris and no one will pay the smallest attention to me, unless it be the journalists."

He was right and we were wrong. While the anarchists and socialists refrained from disturbing his tranquillity, the reporters, on the other hand, clung to his footsteps with the most provoking determination.

This habit of the newspaper men was pushed to such a pitch, at the time of his first private visit to Paris after his accession, that he lost his patience one day and said to me:

"As it appears that I can't have my incognito respected, I shall be obliged, to my great regret, to deprive myself of the pleasure of coming to Paris in future."

I was very much annoyed. Do what I could, it was impossible to throw those gentlemen of the press off the scent! I found them wherever the King went, trotting behind his carriage, waiting outside his door. In my despair, I thought of resorting to an expedient which, at first, struck me as rather ingenious. It consisted in discovering a double for the King, a double whom I would dress in the latest fashion and send to the right when our guest went to the left, to the Gymnase when the King was at the Variétés. As it happened, I knew a retired detective-inspector whose resemblance to Edward VII. was so striking that he was nicknamed "Édouard" in his family-circle and among his friends. Feeling convinced that he would be useful to me in emergencies, I sent for him to come to my office. My memory had not deceived me. He was more like the King than ever; the same face, the same clear eyes, the same neatly-trimmed beard and the same stoutness.

But, alas, there the resemblance ceased! When it became a matter of bowing, walking or smiling, he had nothing whatever in common with His Majesty. I realized that I must abandon the notion of which I had been so proud! I then hit upon a simpler solution: calling together the journalists whose daily task it was to report on the King's movements, I made an appeal to their sense of courtesy and patriotism and besought them to be more discreet in the performance of their duties. Lastly, I offered myself to hand them, every evening, a written account of "the King's day." They accepted. From that moment the King was free . . . and everybody was contented.

7

Eclectic in his tastes, interested in every manifestation of the thoughts of others, careful of his prestige, which he considered one of the necessary attributes of his profession as a king, admiring intensely every ornament of the mind, even as he admired every form of beauty, affable or distant as the occasion demanded, looking at men and life as they passed before his eyes with the same amused curiosity with which he would watch a race from the royal stand, this elegant, fashionable sovereign was profoundly alive, not only to his rights, but also to his duties. In this respect, he forgot nothing and neglected nothing. No court, family or historical anniversary was ever known to slip his memory. He maintained a thoughtful and touching cult of those who had gone before: for instance, his first visit, on arriving at Biarritz, was always paid to the graves of the English soldiers buried in the little cemetery at Bayonne.

He inherited his mother's instinct of the family: in the privacy of his rooms at the hotel, even if he were making a stay of only twenty-four hours, the faithfulness of his thought for his kindred was shown by the promptness with which he instructed his valet, Meidinger, to adorn his mantelpiece and his tables with photographs of the princes and princesses of England, amid which the delicate features and graceful figure of Queen Alexandra stood out in a large silver frame. Lastly, he devoted a regular hour, every day, to his private correspondence.

I confess, however, that what struck me most in the course of the many weeks which I had occasion to pass in his environment was the immense amount of work which he succeeded in transacting in the midst of his brilliant life of sport and society; and this without showing or feeling the least fatigue. He took the same active part in affairs of State when travelling as when in London. He was admirably methodical and exacted from his equerries a daily tribute of labour which was considerable, but in no way disagreeable, thanks to the good-humour and genial courtesy which he showed in his relations with them.

As soon as the government messenger arrived from London, bringing the three large canvas bags, each sealed with a red seal and each bearing a badge inscribed with the simple words "Post Office," after the postmaster had sorted the many envelopes which they contained, the King examined all the dispatches, studied them, annotated them, wrote to the prime minister with his own hand, himself treated all the important questions, directed how the others were to be dealt with and divided the work between his equerries. These two gentlemen had separate files for each government department, which were kept with the greatest fastidiousness; and it was marvellous to see the speed and accuracy with which they were able to obtain information on any subject likely to interest the King. There was never any confusion, never any mistake. However oppressive their task might be at times, they accomplished it with the same smiling, silent imperturbability as though they were sitting down to a rubber of bridge.

Naturally it was at Biarritz that I saw most of the King and those about him. His Majesty, as everybody knows, had given up his former habit of spending a part of the winter on the Riviera :

" I no longer go to Cannes and Nice," he said to me, one day, " because you meet too many princes there. I should be obliged to spend all my time in paying and receiving visits, whereas I come to the Continent to rest."

As a matter of fact, I have noticed that kings and princes prefer to " avoid " one another when they are abroad, as witness the following incident, of which I was a bewildered and amused spectator. It was in the spring of 1908. The King of England had just arrived in Paris and had taken a box for the same evening at the Théâtre des Capucines. I went with His Majesty. Leaving the box to take a glance at the tiny house, I was surprised to see the King of the Belgians seated in the stalls.

I went back and told King Edward.

" I am delighted to hear it," he replied.

And, from that moment, he carefully refrained from looking in the direction where his brother sovereign was sitting.

When the King of England had left the theatre, I waited for the King of the Belgians at the entrance. After paying him my respects :

" We had a houseful of kings to-night, Sir," I said. " Do you know that the King of England was at the play, too ? "

" You don't mean to say so ! " he said, with an air of the greatest surprise. " I am sorry not to have seen him : I should have been pleased to go and shake hands with him."

After King Leopold had gone :

" He knew all about it ! " said M. Michel Mortier, the manager of the theatre, in my ear, " I told him myself ! "

And yet there was no " coolness " of any kind between the two kings, a fact of which I was able to convince myself when they met at the Salon the next morning and chatted pleasantly for a quarter of an hour.

8

At Biarritz, strictly mapped-out though his days were, what King Edward called " rest " nevertheless admitted of a singularly active life. Rising regularly at seven o'clock in the morning, he began by taking a warm bath and drinking a glass of milk, after which he proceeded to dress.

This he always did by himself, having first named the different suits of clothes which he proposed to wear during the day.

At ten o'clock, breakfast was served, consisting of boiled eggs, grilled bacon and fried fish, with a marked preference for smelts and small trout, washed down with a large cup of coffee and milk. He next sat down at his writing-table, which he did not leave until a quarter-past twelve for his daily walk, which lasted until lunch-time, one o'clock. Lunch invariably included plovers' eggs, hard-boiled, with a touch of paprika pepper, which were followed by trout, salmon or grilled soles, a meat dish and stewed fruit. Plovers' eggs, asparagus and strawberries were his pet fare; on the other hand, he hated butcher's meat and could endure nothing heavier than chicken, except an occasional slice of lamb.

The evening meal, which was fixed at a quarter past eight, was generally pretty copious; and the King enjoyed having people whom he honoured with his friendship to dinner; but covers were never laid for more than ten. The King, at his meals, drank chablis and Perrier water, dry champagne and occasionally claret, with a glass of " Napoleon " brandy at dessert. His favourite drink between meals was whisky and soda.

I noticed also that he was a quick eater and did not allow lunch to last more than thirty minutes nor dinner to stretch over more than forty to forty-five. Also, he would not let any servants but his own appear in the dining-room. The waiters of the hotel brought the dishes to the door of the royal suite, where the King's footman, Hoepfner, took them and handed them back as each course was finished.

The King, lastly, was a great smoker. In his cigar-case, which his valet filled for him every morning, Henry Clays, of the brand known as "Tsar," lay side by side with Corona y Coronas. His favourite cigarettes were Royal Derbies and Laurens. He wore on his watch-chain a tiny gold match-box engraved with the royal crown. I ventured one day to admire it, whereupon he at once took it from his chain:

"Accept it, my dear Paoli," he said, "as a souvenir. I should like you to have it."

And he very graciously obliged me to fasten it to my own chain, where I have worn it ever since.

The King also possessed a remarkable collection of walking-sticks, all of which were adorned with his monogram in brilliants: an "E" surmounted by a crown. There was one, in particular, to which he was greatly attached: it used to belong to Queen Victoria and was said to come from a branch of the oak in which King Charles II. took shelter when fleeing from Cromwell's troopers after the battle of Worcester. It was handed down by the descendants of the Stuarts and bore their monogram, until the Queen had this replaced by an exquisite little figure of a Hindoo goddess discovered, in the course of some excavations, on the banks of the Ganges. The King, of course, never used this precious stick, at least not when travelling.

There was another peculiarity which I had occasion to observe : all the King's overcoats had a little white silk cross stitched on the lining, just beneath the collar. It appears that this was the compulsory badge worn by the knights of Malta, whose traditions were respected by the King in his capacity as grand master of the order.

9

During his stay at Biarritz, the King went for a drive every afternoon in his motor-car. The superintendent of the English police and I used to follow in a second car. He liked stopping at the Basque villages, visiting the churches, watching a game of pelota; and he never went away without leaving a token of his generosity behind him for the poor.

When they heard of his presence at Biarritz, numbers of needy people imagined that Heaven had sent them an unexpected windfall; and a regular swarm of beggars came down upon the town. Fearing lest the sovereign should be importuned, I had them all sent away, with the exception of two old blind beggars, whose character was known to me and who were worthy of all pity. Regularly, whatever the weather, they posted themselves daily, at the time of the King's walk, on the road that led to the beach. As soon as they heard Cæsar barking—the dog could never bring himself to tolerate them !—they held out their bowls and each of them, with the sleeve of his coat, dusted the placard on his chest, inscribed, in big clumsy letters, with the time-honoured formula, " Pity the poor blind." The King walked up to them, dropped a handsome alms in their respective trays and said, as he passed :

" Till to-morrow ! "

Now it happened that, one morning, he saw only one of the blind men at the usual spot. Startled and fearing lest some accident had befallen the other—for he had gradually become accustomed to the sight of those faithful sentries—he made enquiries about the absentee. No one had seen him. The next day, the second blind man was at his post again.

" Were you ill yesterday ? " asked the King.

" No, monsieur le Roi."

" Then you were late ? "

" Excuse me, monsieur le Roi, I beg your pardon," the old man answered, not knowing what to say. " You were early ! "

" A thousand apologies ! " replied the King, laughing heartily.

Edward VII., as I have already implied, had an immense sense of humour. He was once at Biarritz during the elections for the municipal council and he took a playful pleasure in stopping in front of the candidates' posters and reading them, like any ordinary elector. One day, when he was looking at a newly-posted placard, a rough sort of fellow by his side, calling his mate's attention to the sovereign, said :

" I'll bet you that cove there, in the grey overcoat, is a royalist ! "

King Edward heard him, turned round and answered, with a smile :

" So I wear my opinions on my clothes ? "

He also enjoyed talking to poor people and visiting their humble dwellings. I remember an incident that happened during a brief stay which he made at Marseilles, before embarking on his Mediterranean cruise. We were returning from Aix-en-Provence, where we had been for a motor-drive. It came on to rain very heavily and the royal cars stopped at the village of Tholouet, where the King rested for a few minutes in a wayside shanty kept by a peasant called Thomé and his wife. Thomé was out; and his wife served the sovereign and the members of his suite as though they were ordinary customers. The rain soon brought M. Thomé home. He entered his inn, placidly puffing at a great long pipe :

" What filthy weather ! " he said. " And to think that people go motoring in a rain like this ! "

He next opened the door of the room in which the King was, and shouted :

" Hullo, Gravary, what are you doing here ? You're looking as fine as a fresh-scraped carrot to-day ! "

He had only caught sight of the King's back and took him for one of his own friends, dressed out in his Sunday best. His Majesty's aide-de-camp, Captain Seymour Fortescue, recalled him to a sense of the reality of things by whispering to him to hold his tongue :

" You're speaking to the King of England," he said.

" To the King ! " The wretched Thomé turned pale. " *Mon Dieu, que m'arriba !* " he exclaimed, in his native patois.

He has since religiously preserved the poor cane-bottomed chair in which Edward VII. sat and the glass from which His Majesty took a sip of brandy from a bottle marked with two stars.

The fact is that the spell which Edward VII. cast over all those who had the honour to approach him was so great that any one was anxious to preserve a lasting memorial of the favour received. His simple geniality and his discreet kindliness won the heart of the crowds as readily as his intellectual superiority conquered the deferential esteem of the cream of society. In the cottage homes of France people said, " That's a good man ; " and in the political drawing-rooms people thought, " That is a great king."

I do not know if these notes will help history to preserve a picture of his powerful personality in the charm of its intimacy. This, at any rate, has not been my ambition. I simply wish them to recall to the memory of those who have come into contact with him the *man* whom they have known in the *sovereign;* the man with the great heart and the great mind that stamped all his thoughts, all his acts, all his attitudes with a fascinating individuality; the friend who understood us Frenchmen better than any one whosoever, and who lavished upon us the most delicate tokens of his admiration and of his affectionate regard.

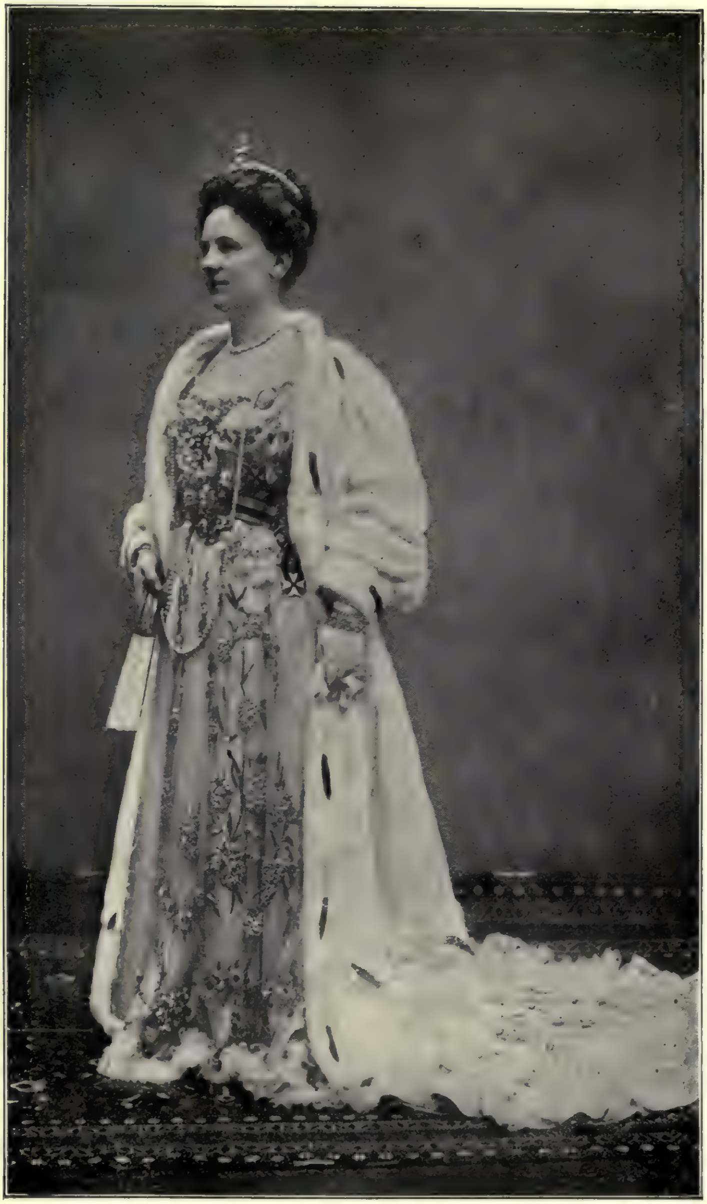
CHAPTER VIII

QUEEN WILHELMINA OF THE NETHERLANDS

1

I HAD the honour of presenting myself to Queen Wilhelmina, on the 1st of November 1895, at Geneva, the city where, a year earlier, I had gone to meet the tragic and charming Empress Elizabeth of Austria, and where, three years later, I was fated to see her lying on a bed in an hotel, stabbed to death. The official instructions with which I was furnished stated that I was to accompany Their Majesties the Queen and Queen Regent of the Netherlands from Geneva to Aix-les-Bains, and to ensure their safety during their stay on French soil.

I have preserved a pleasant recollection of this presentation, which took place on the station-platform on a dull, wintry morning. I remember how, while I was introducing myself to General Du Monceau, the Queen's principal aide-de-camp, there suddenly appeared on the foot-board of the royal carriage a young girl with laughing eyes, her face agleam and pink under her flaxen tresses, very simply dressed in a blue tailor-made skirt and coat, with a big black boa round her neck. And I remember a fresh, almost childish



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voice that made the general give a brisk half-turn and a courtly bow:

"General," it said, "don't forget to buy me some postcards!'

This pink, fair-haired girl, with the clear voice, was Queen Wilhelmina, who at that time was the very personification of the title of "the little Queen" which Europe, with one accord, had bestowed upon her, a title suggestive of fragile grace, touching familiarity and affectionate deference. She was just sixteen years of age. It was true that, as a poet had written:

> "A pair of woman's eyes already gazed
> Above her childish smile;"

and that her apprenticeship in the performance of a queen's duties had already endowed her mind with a precocious maturity. Nevertheless, her prompt astonishment, her spontaneity, her frank gaiety, her reckless courage showed that she was still a real girl, in the full sense of the word. She hastened, happy and trusting, to the encounter of life; she blossomed like the tulips of her own far fields; she was of the age that gives imperious orders to destiny, that lives in a palace of glass! I doubt whether she really understood—although she never made a remark to me on the subject—that the French government had thought itself obliged to appoint a solemn functionary—even though it were only M. Paoli!—whose one and only mission was to protect her against the dagger of a possible assassin. The sweet little Queen could not imagine herself to possess an enemy; and the people who had approached her hitherto had learnt nothing from her but her gentle kindness.

As for Queen Emma, she was as simple and as easy of access as her daughter, although more reserved. She fulfilled her double task as regent and mother, as counsellor and educator, with great dignity, bringing to it the virile authority, the spirit of decision and the equability of character which we so often find in women summoned by a too-early widowhood to assume the responsibilities of the head of a family. And nothing more edifying was ever seen than the close union that prevailed between those two illustrious ladies, who never left each other's side, taking all their meals alone, though they were accompanied by a numerous suite, and living in a constant communion of thought and in the still enjoyment of a mutual and most touching affection.

Their suite, as I have said, was a numerous one. In fact, it consisted, in addition to Lieutenant-general Count Du Monceau, of two chamberlains: Colonel (now Major-general) Jonkheer Willem van de Poll and Jonkheer Rudolph van Pabst van Bingerden (now Baron van Pabst van Bingerden); a business secretary: Jonkheer P. J. Vegelin van Claerbergen; two ladies-in-waiting: "Mesdemoiselles les Baronnes" (as they were styled in the Dutch protocol) Elisabeth van Ittersum and Anna Juckema van Burmania Rengers; a reader: Miss Kreusler; five waiting-women; and five footmen. Compared with the tiny courts that usually accompanied other sovereigns when travelling, this made a rather imposing display! Nevertheless and notwithstanding the fact that this sixteen-year-old Queen appeared to me decked in all the glory of a fairy princess, I am bound to admit that the royal circle presented none of the venerable austerity and superannuated grace so quaintly conjured up in Perrault's Tales. The jonkheers[1] were not old lords equipped with shirt frills and snuff-boxes; *mesdemoiselles les baronnes* were not stern duennas encased in stiff silk gowns: the court was young and gay, with that serene and healthy gaiety which characterizes the Dutch temperament.

Why was it going to Aix? The choice of this stay puzzled me. Aix-les-Bains is hardly ever visited in November. The principal hotels are closed, for, in that mountainous region, winter sets in with full severity immediately after the end of autumn.

I put the question to General Du Monceau, who explained to me that the doctors had recommended Queen Wilhelmina to take a three-weeks' cure of pure, keen air; and that was why they had selected Aix, or rather the Corbières, a spot situated at 2,000 feet above Aix, on the slope of the Grand Revard.

It goes without saying that there was no hotel there; and the only villa in the neighbourhood had to be hired for the Queen's use. This was a large wooden châlet, standing on the edge of a pine-forest, close to the hamlet. The wintry wind whistled under the doors and howled down the chimneys; there was no central heating-apparatus and huge fires were lit in every room. From the windows of this rustic dwelling, the eye took in the amphitheatre of the mountains of Savoy and their deep and beautiful valleys; and, above the thatched roofs ensconced among the trees, one saw little columns of blue smoke rise trembling to the sky.

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[1] *Jonkheer* is a Dutch hereditary title of nobility, ranking below that of baron.—*Translator's Note.*

Snow began to fall on the day after our arrival. It soon covered the mountains all around with a cloak of dazzling white, spread a soft carpet over the meadows before the house and powdered the long tresses of the pines with hoar-frost. And a great silence ensued; and I seemed to be living more and more in the midst of a fairy-tale.

The court settled down as best it could. The two Queens occupied three unpretending rooms on the first floor; the royal suite divided the other apartments among them; some of the servants were lodged in a neighbouring farm-house. As for myself, I was bound to keep in daily telegraphic touch with Paris and with the prefect of the department; and I found it more convenient to sleep at Aix. I went up to the Corbières every morning by the funicular railway, which had been reopened for the use of our royal guests, and went down again, every evening, by the same route.

The two Queens, who appeared to revel in this austere solitude, had planned out for themselves a regular and methodical mode of life. They were up by eight o'clock in the morning and walked to the hamlet, chatted with the peasants and cow-herds and, after a short stroll, returned to the villa, where Queen Emma, who, at that period, was still exercising the functions of regent, dispatched her affairs of State, while little Queen Wilhelmina employed her time in studying or drawing, for she was a charming and gifted draughtswoman. She loved nothing more than to jot down from life, so to speak, such rustic scenes as offered : peasant-lads leading their cows to the fields, or girls knitting or sewing on the threshold of their doors. The people round about came to know this; they also knew that Her Majesty was in the habit of generously rewarding her willing models. And so, as soon as she had installed herself with her sketch-book and pencils, by the roadside, or in her garden, cows or little pigs, accompanied by their owners, would spring up as though by magic !

I have said that the Queens were in the habit of taking their meals alone. Nevertheless, outside meals, they mingled very readily with the members of their suite, whom they honoured with an affectionate familiarity.

The afternoons—whatever the weather might be—were devoted to long walks, on which Queen Wilhelmina used to set out accompanied generally by one or two ladies-in-waiting and a chamberlain; sometimes I would go with her myself.

Queen Emma, knowing her daughter's indefatigable venturesomeness, had given up accompanying her on her expeditions. We often returned covered with snow, our faces blue with the cold, our boots soaked through; but it made no difference: the little Queen was delighted. She dusted her gaiters, shook her skirt and her pale golden hair that hung over her shoulders and said:

" I wish that it were to-morrow and that we were starting out again ! "

2

Queen Wilhelmina was very expansive in her manner and yet very thoughtful. Trained in the strictest principles by a watchful and inflexible mother, she had learnt from childhood to shirk neither work nor fatigue, to brave the inclemencies of the weather, to distinguish herself alike in bodily and in mental exercises, in short, to prepare herself in the most serious fashion for her duties as queen and to realize all the hopes that were centred on her young head.

I often had occasion, during my stay at the Corbières, to notice the thoroughness of her education. She already spoke four languages, in addition to her mother-tongue, fluently: French, Russian, English and German. She interested herself in agricultural matters and was not unacquainted with social questions: for instance, she often made me talk to her about the condition of the workmen in France and the organization of our administrative systems; nay more, she was beginning to study both judicial and constitutional law. I would not, however, go so far as to say that this study aroused her enthusiasm: she preferred, I believe, to read historical books; she took a great interest in the Napoleonic idyll, and, knowing me to be a fellow-countryman of Bonaparte:

"You must feel very sorry," she said to me, one day, "that you came too late to see him!"

She also liked to talk to me about her ponies:

"I have four," she told me, "and I drive them four-in-hand."

I was often invited to share the meals of the miniature court and to take my seat at the table of the chamberlains and ladies-in-waiting, which was presided over, with charming courtesy and geniality, by my excellent friend Count Du Monceau, who, although a Dutch general, was of French origin, as his name shows.[1]

At one of these dinners, I met with a little mishap which gave a great shock both to my patriotism and to my natural gluttony. The cook of the villa, M. Perréard, was a native of Marseilles and owned an hotel at Cannes, where I had made his acquaintance. In his twofold capacity as a Marseillese and a cook, he was a great hand at making *bouillabaisse*, the national dish of the people of the south. Now, as he knew that I was very fond of this dainty, he said to me, one day, with a great air of mystery :

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[1] The family of Dumonceau is of Belgian origin and derives from an ancestor in the parish of Saint-Géry, Brussels.—*Translator's Note.*

" M. Paoli, I have a pleasant surprise in store for you at lunch this morning. I have sent to Marseilles for fish and shell-fish so as to give you a *bouillabaisse* cooked in the way you know of. Not another word ! But they'll have a good time up there, I can tell you, those people from the north who have never tasted it ! "

As soon as we had sat down, I saw with delight the great soup-tureen, whence escaped a delicious fragrance of *bouillabaisse*. The members of the royal suite cast inquisitive glances at this dish, unknown to them, and prepared to do honour to it with a good grace. Before tasting it myself, I watched the expression of their faces. Alas, a grievous disappointment awaited me ! Hardly had they touched their spoons with their lips, when they vented their disgust in different ways. Baroness van Ittersum made a significant grimace, while Jonkheer van Pabst pushed away his plate and Baroness Rengers suppressed a gesture of repugnance.

However, out of consideration for my feelings, they were silent; so was I. They waited in all kindness for me to enjoy my treat; but one act of politeness deserves another : there was nothing for me to do, in my turn, but to forgo my share, all the more so as I did not feel inclined to present the ridiculous spectacle of a man eating, by himself, a dish which all his neighbours loathe and detest.

The *bouillabaisse,* therefore, disappeared straightway, untouched and still steaming, beating, as it were, a silent retreat. But I will not attempt to describe the rage which M. Perréard subsequently poured into my ears.

3

When the Queen had explored all the woods and ravines close at hand, she naturally wished to extend the radius of her excursions. She was a fearless walker and was not to be thwarted by the steepest paths, even when these were filled with snow in which one's feet sank up to the ankles. I urgently begged the young sovereign never to venture far afield without first informing me of her intentions. As a matter of fact, I knew how easy it was to lose one's self in the maze of mountains, where one misses the trace of any road; and I was also afraid of unpleasant meetings, for Savoy is often infested with strangers from beyond the Piedmontese frontier who come to France in search of work.

Lastly, there was "the black man." The legend of this black man was current throughout the district, where it spread a secret terror. Stories were told in the hamlet of a man dressed in black from head to foot, who roamed at nightfall through the neighbouring forests. He had eyes of fire and was frightfully lean.

The peasants were convinced that it was a ghost, for he never answered when spoken to and disappeared as soon as any one drew near. I did not, of course, share the superstitious terrors of the inhabitants of the Corbières; but I thought that the ghost might be some tramp or marauder and I did not care for the Queens to come across him. Imagine my alarm, therefore, when, one afternoon, after I had gone down to Aix, I was handed the following laconic telegram:

"Queen gone walk without notice late returning."

To jump into the funicular railway and go back to the Corbières was for me the work of a few minutes. There I heard that Queen Wilhelmina had gone out with her two ladies-in-waiting, saying that she meant to take a little exercise, as she had not been out all day, and that she would be back in an hour. Two hours had elapsed, the Queen had not returned and Queen Emma was beginning to feel seriously alarmed.

I at once rushed out in search of Her Majesty, questioning the people whom I met on my way. No one had seen her. I ran into the forest, where I knew that she was fond of going; I called out: no reply. Growing more and more anxious, I was about to hunt in another direction, when my eyes fell upon traces of feet that had left their imprint on the snow. I examined them: the foot-prints were too small to belong to a man; they had evidently been made by women's shoes. I therefore followed the trail as carefully as an Indian hunter. Nor was I mistaken: after half-an-hour's walk, I heard clear voices call out and soon I saw the little Queen arrive, happy and careless, followed by her two companions :

" Well, M. Paoli, you were running after us, I will bet you were ! . . . Just think, we got lost without knowing and were looking for our way. It was great fun ! "

I did not venture to admit that I was far from sharing this opinion, and I confined myself to warning the Queen that her mother was anxious about her.

" Then let us hurry back as fast as we can," she said, her face suddenly becoming overcast.

And I have no doubt that Her Majesty, on her return, received a sound scolding.

Strangely enough, I was able to lay my hand upon " the black man " on the evening of the very same day. It was a bright night, with the moon shining on the snow-clad mountains, and I resolved to go down to Aix on foot, instead of using the funicular railway. I therefore took the path that led through the wood ; and, on reaching a glade at a few yards from the royal villa, I perceived a shadow that appeared to be hiding behind the trees :

" There's the famous black man," I thought.

But, as the shadow had all the air of an animal of the human species, I also contemplated the possible presence of an anarchist charged to watch the approaches to the royal residence. I took out my revolver and shouted :

" Who goes there ? "

"I, monsieur le commissaire!" replied a familiar voice, while the shadow took shape, emerged from the trees, stepped forward and gave the military salute.

I then recognized one of my own inspectors, whom I had instructed to go the rounds of the precincts of the Queens' châlet nightly. He was the individual who had been taken for "the black man." However, he seemed none the worse for it.

4

When the Queen had visited all the places in the immediate neighbourhood of the Corbières and tasted sufficiently of the pleasure of looking upon herself as a new Little Red Riding-hood in her wild solitudes, or a new Sleeping Beauty (whose Prince Charming was not to come until many years later), she expressed a wish to go on the longer excursions which the country-side afforded. We therefore set out, one fine morning, for the Abbey of Hautecombe, situated on the banks of the poetic Lac du Bourget, which inspired Lamartine with one of his most beautiful meditations.

Although standing on French territory, the old abbey occupied by the Cistercian monks continues to belong to Italy, or, at least, remains the property of the royal house, by virtue of an agreement made between the two governments at the time of the French annexation of Savoy in 1860. It contains forty-three tombs of princes and princesses of the House of Savoy. All the ancestors of King Victor Emanuel, from Amadeus V. to Humbert III., lie under the charge of the White Fathers in this ancient monastery full of silence and majesty. Their mausoleums are carved, for the most part, by the chisels of illustrious sculptors; they stand side by side in the great nave of the chapel, which is in the form of a Latin cross, with vaults painted sky-blue and transepts peopled with upwards of three hundred statues in Carrara marble. These, crowded together within that narrow fabric, form as it were a motionless and reflective crowd watching over the dead.

The visitor bends over the tombs and reads the names inscribed upon them; and all the adventurous, chivalrous, heroic and gallant history of the House of Savoy comes to life again. Here lie Amadeus, surnamed the Red Count, and Philibert I., the Hunter; further on, we come to Maria Christina of Bourbon-Savoy, Joan of Montfort and Boniface of Savoy, the prince who became Archbishop of Canterbury;[1] further still is the tomb of the young and charming Yolande of Montferrat, who sleeps beside her father, Aymon the Peaceful. Lastly, at the entrance of the church, in the chapel of Our Lady of the Angels, stands the sarcophagus of Charles Felix

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[1] Boniface of Savoy was nominated to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, in 1241, by King Henry III. of England, who had married Boniface's niece Eleanor, daughter of Raymond Berengar Count of Provence and Beatrix of Savoy.—*Translator's Note.*

King of Sardinia, who restored Hautecombe in 1842.

This fine historical lesson within a monastic sanctuary interested the two Dutch Queens greatly. It made Queen Wilhelmina very thoughtful, especially at a given moment when the monk who acted as her guide said, with a touch of pride in his voice :

" The House of Savoy is a glorious house ! "

After a second's pause, the little Queen replied :

" So is the House of Orange ! "

A few days after our excursion to Hautecombe, we went to visit the Cascade de Crésy, a sort of furious torrent in which Marshal Ney's sister, the Baronne de Broc, was drowned in 1818 before the eyes of Queen Hortense, the mother of Napoleon III. We also drove to the Gorges du Fier, in which no human being had dared to venture before 1869. Queen Wilhelmina, ever eager for emotional impressions, insisted on penetrating at all costs through the narrow passage that leads into the gorges. The Queen Mother lived through minutes of agony that day, although I did my best to persuade Her Majesty that her daughter was not really incurring any danger. But there is no convincing an anxious mother !

Stimulated by these various excursions, the little Queen said to me, one morning :

" M. Paoli, I have formed a great plan. My mother approves. I want to go and see the Grande Chartreuse."

" That is easily done," I replied, " but it will take a whole day, for the monastery is a good distance from here."

" Well, M. Paoli, arrange the excursion as you think best : with the snow on the ground, it will be magnificent ! "

I wrote to the Father Superior to tell him of the Queen's wish. He answered by return that, to his regret, he was unable to open the doors of the monastery to women, even though they were queens, without the express authorization of the Pope. And indeed I remembered that the same objection had arisen some years earlier, when I wanted to take Queen Victoria to the Grande Chartreuse : I had to apply to Rome on that occasion also.

I therefore hastened to communicate the answer to General Du Monceau, who at once telegraphed to Cardinal Rampolla, at that time Secretary of State to the Holy See. Cardinal Rampolla telegraphed the same evening that the Pope granted the necessary authority.

These diplomatic preliminaries gave an additional zest to our expedition. For it was a genuine expedition. We left Aix-les-Bains at eight o'clock in the morning, by special train, for Saint-Béron, which was then the terminus of the railway, before entering the great mountain. Here, two landaus with horses and postilions awaited us. The two Queens and their ladies stepped into one of the carriages; General Du Monceau, the officers of the suite and I occupied the other; and we started. It was eleven o'clock in the morning and we had a three-hours' drive before us. Notwithstanding the intense cold, a flood of sunshine fell upon the immense frozen and deserted mountain-mass and lit up with a blinding flame the long sheets of snow that lay stretching to the horizon, where they seemed to be merged in the deep blue of the sky. No sign of life appeared in that sea of mountains, amid the throng of dissimilar summits, some blunt, some pointed, but all girt at their base with huge pine-forests. Only the rhythmical tinkling of our harness-bells disturbed the deep silence.

We began to feel the pangs of hunger after an hour's driving. I had foreseen that we should find no inn on the road and had taken care to have baskets of provisions stored in the boot of each carriage at Saint-Béron.

" That's a capital idea," said Queen Wilhelmina, " You shall lunch with us. I will lay the cloth ! "

The carriages had stopped in the middle of the road, in the vast solitude, opposite the prodigious panorama of white mountains and gloomy valleys. The little Queen spread a large table-napkin over our knees. From the depths of a hamper, she produced a cold chicken, rolls and butter and solemnly announced :

" Luncheon is served."

Served by a queen, in a carriage, on a mountain-top : that was an incident lacking to my collection, as King Alfonso would have said !

I need hardly add that this picturesque luncheon was extremely lively and that not a vestige of it remained when, at two o'clock, we approached the Grande Chartreuse.

We caught sight first of the square tower, then of the great slate roofs, then of the countless steeples, until, at last, in the fold of a valley, the impressive block of buildings came into view, all grey amid its white setting and backed by the snow-covered forests scrambling to the summit of the Col de la Ruchère. Perched amidst this immaculate steppe, among those spurs bristling with contorted and threatening rocks, as though in some apocalyptic landscape, the cold, stern, proud convent froze us with a nameless terror: it seemed to us as though we had reached the mysterious regions of a Wagnerian Walhalla; the fairy-tale had turned into a legend, through which the flaxen-haired figure of the little Queen passed like a light and airy shadow.

All the inhabitants of the monastery stood awaiting the Queens on the threshold of the gateway. The monks were grouped around their superior; their white frocks mingled with the depths of the huge corridor, the endless perspective oɪ which showed through the open door.

The father superior stepped forward to greet the two Queens. Tall in stature, with the grace of an ascetic, a pair of piercing eyes, an harmonious voice and a cold dignity combined with an exquisite courtesy, he had the grand manner of a well-bred man of the world:

" Welcome to Your Majesties," he said, slowly, with a bow.

The Queens, a little awe-struck, made excuses for their curiosity; and the inspection began. The monks led their royal visitors successively through the cloister, the refectories, the fine library, which at that time contained over twenty thousand volumes, and the rooms devoted to work and meditation, each of which bore the name of a country or province, because formerly they served as meeting-places for the priors of the charter-houses of each of those countries or provinces. They showed their kitchen, with its table formed of a block of marble nine yards long and its chimney of colossal proportions. They threw open the great chapter-house, decorated with twenty-two portraits of the generals of the order from its foundation and furnished with lofty stalls, in which the monks used to come and sit when, twice a year, they held their secret assembly. They showed their exiguous cells, with their tiled floors and whitewashed walls, each containing a truckle-bed, a praying-chair, a table, a crucifix, and a window opening upon the vast and splendid horizon of the fierce mountains beyond. Lastly, they showed their church, with its Gothic carvings surmounted by a statue of death, and their desolate and monotonous cemetery, in which only the graves of the priors are distinguished by a wooden cross. But they did not show their relics and their precious sacred books. I expressed my astonishment at this; and one of the fathers replied, coldly :

“ That is because the Queens are heretics. We only show them to Catholics.”

Queen Wilhelmina, who had gradually recovered her assurance, plied the superior with questions, to which he replied with a perfect good grace. When, at last, the walk through the maze of passages and cloisters was finished, the Queen hesitated and asked :

“ And the chartreuse ? Don’t you make that here ? ”

“ Certainly, Ma’am,” said the prior, “ but we did not think that our distillery could interest Your Majesty.”

“ Oh, but it does ! ” answered the Queen, with a smile. “ I want to see everything.”

We were then taken to the “ Mill,” situated at an hour’s distance from the monastery, where the Carthusians, with their sleeves turned back, prepared the delicious liqueur the secret of which they have now taken with them in their exile. The Queens put their lips to a glass of yellow elixir offered to them by the superior and accepted a few bottles as a present. The visit had interested them prodigiously.

Half-an-hour later, we had left the monastery far behind us in its stately solitude and were driving down the other slope of the mountain to Grenoble, where we were to find a special train to take us back to Aix-les-Bains. When we approached the old Dauphiné capital, the day had turned into a night of black and icy darkness; in front of us, in the depths of the valley, all the lamps of the great town displayed their thousands of twinkling lights; and Queen Wilhelmina kept on exclaiming:

"How beautiful! How delighted I am!"

She was not so well pleased—nor was I—when, at the gate of the town, we saw cyclists who appeared to be on the look-out for the carriages and who darted off as scouts before our landaus, as soon as they perceived us. These mysterious proceedings puzzled me all the more inasmuch as I had taken care not to inform the authorities of Grenoble that the Queens intended to pass through their city, knowing as I did, on the one hand, that the municipal council was composed of socialists, and, on the other, that Their Majesties wished to preserve the strictest incognito. But I had reckoned without the involuntary indiscretion of the railway-staff, who had allowed the fact to leak out that a special train had been ordered for the sovereigns; and, as no one is more anxious to receive a smile from royalty than the stern, uncompromising adherents of Messrs. Jaurès & Co., the first arm that was respectfully put out to assist Queen Wilhelmina to alight from the carriage was that of the socialist senator who, that year, was serving as mayor of Grenoble. He was all honey; he had prepared a speech; he had provided a band. Willy-nilly, we had to submit to an official reception. True, we were amply compensated, as the train steamed out of the station, by hearing cries of " Long live the Queens ! " issuing from the throats of men who spent the rest of the year in shouting, " Down with tyrants ! "

Such is the eternal comedy of politics and mankind !

5

The Queens' stay at the Corbières was drawing to a close. We had exhausted all the walks and excursions; the cold was becoming daily more intense; the icy wind whistled louder than ever under the ill-fitting doors. At the royal châlet, the little Queen was growing tired of sketching young herds with their flocks or old peasant-women combing wool. One morning, General Du Monceau said to me :

" Their Majesties have decided to go to Italy. They will start for Milan the day after to-morrow."

Two days later, I parted from them at the frontier; and, as I was taking leave of them :

" We shall meet again," said Queen Wilhelmina, " I am longing to see Paris."

She did not realize her wish until two years later. It was in the spring of 1898—a year made memorable in her life because it marked her political majority and the commencement of her real reign—that, accompanied by her mother, she paid her first visit to Paris on her way to Cannes for the wedding of Prince Christian of Denmark (the present Crown-prince) and the Grand-duchess Mary of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

" Do you remember the day when we went to the Grande Chartreuse ? " were her first words on seeing me.

She still had her bright, childish glance, but she now wore her pretty hair done up high, as befitted her age, and her figure had filled out in a way that seemed to accentuate her radiant air of youth.

Anecdotes were told of her playfulness that contrasted strangely with her sedate appearance. Chief among them was the well-known story according to which she loved to tease her English governess, Miss Saxton Winter : all Holland had heard how, one day, when drawing a map of Europe, she amused herself by enlarging the frontiers of the Netherlands out of all proportion and considerably reducing the limits of Great Britain. Another story was that, having regretfully failed to induce the postal authorities to alter her portrait on the Dutch stamps, which still represented her as a little girl, with her hair down, she never omitted with her own pen to correct the postage-stamps which she used for her private correspondence!

These childish ways did not prevent her from manifesting a keen interest in poetry and art. Her favourite reading was represented by Sir Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas the Elder; but she also read books on history and painting with the greatest pleasure. She had acquired a remarkable erudition on these subjects in the course of her studies, as I had occasion to learn during our visits to the museums, especially the Louvre. She was as familiar with the Italian and French schools of painting as with the Dutch and Flemish, although she maintained a preference for Rembrandt :

" I should like him to have a statue in every town in Holland ! " she said.

I need hardly say that the artistic treasures of Paris did not absorb her attention to the extent of causing her to disregard the attractions and temptations which our capital offers to the curiosity of a young and elegant woman who does not scorn the fascination of dress. Queen Wilhelmina used to go into ecstasies over the beauty and luxury of our shops; and Queen Emma had the greatest difficulty in dragging her from the windows of the tradesmen in the Rue Royale and the Rue de la Paix. It nearly always ended with a visit to the shop and the making of numerous purchases.

The little Queen won the affection of all with whom she came into contact by her simplicity, her frankness and the charming innocence with which she indulged in the sheer delight of living. Although possessed of an easy and ready power of admiration, she remained Dutch at heart and professed a proud and exclusive patriotism.

" I can understand," said President Félix Faure to me, on the day after the visit which he paid to the two Queens, " that the Dutch nation shows an exemplary loyalty to Queen Wilhelmina: it recognizes itself in her."

Indeed, nowhere is the sovereign more securely installed than in Holland, nor does the work of government proceed anywhere more smoothly. In Holland, constitutional rule performs its functions automatically, while the budget balances regularly, year by year, thanks to the profitable colonies and trade. Happy country! What other State can say as much to-day?

A week after their arrival in Paris, the two Queens left for Cannes. I had been called south by my service in waiting on Queen Victoria, who had just gone to Cannes herself, and I was obliged to leave a few days before Their Majesties. But I met them again at the Danish wedding; and I saw Queen Wilhelmina for the last time shortly before her departure for Holland. It was in the late afternoon, at the moment when the sun was on the point of disappearing behind the palm-trees in the garden of the hotel where the Queen of England had taken up her residence. Queen Wilhelmina had come to say good-bye: she was standing in an attitude of timid deference before the old sovereign seated in her bath-chair. Both Queens were smiling and talking merrily. Then Wilhelmina stooped, kissed Queen Victoria on the forehead and tripped away lightly in the golden rays of the setting sun.

She has not returned to France since then.

CHAPTER IX

THE LATE KING OF THE BELGIANS

1

Of all the sovereigns with whom I have been connected in the course of my career, Leopold II. is perhaps the one whom I knew best, with the circumstances of whose private life I was most intimately acquainted, and whose thoughts and soul I was, nevertheless, least able to fathom, for the simple reason that his thoughts were impenetrable and his soul ever closed. Was this due to excessive egotism or supreme indifference? To both, perhaps. He was as baffling as a puzzle, carried banter occasionally to the verge of insolence and cynicism to that of cruelty; and, if, at times, he yielded to fits of noisy gaiety, if, from behind the rough exterior, there sometimes shot an impulse of unexpected kindness, these were but passing gleams. He promptly recovered his wonderful self-control; and those about him were too greatly fascinated by his intelligence to seek to understand his habit of mind or heart. And yet, though fascinating, he was as uncommunicative as it is possible to be; he possessed none of those external attractions of the intellect which captivate and charm; but, whenever he deigned to grant you the honour of an interview, however brief, you at once discovered in him a prodigious brain, a luminous perspicacity and critical powers of amazing subtlety and keenness.

No sovereign used—and abused—all the springs of his physical and moral activity to a greater extent than did Leopold II. to his dying day. An everlasting traveller, passing without cessation from a motor-car into a train, from a train on to a boat, caring little for the delights of sleep, he worked continuously, whether in the presence of some fine view, or at sea, or at meals, or in the train, or in his hotel, or on a walk; the place and the hour mattered to him but little.

"Monsieur l'officier, take down!" he would say to his equerry, at the most unexpected moment.

And "monsieur l'officier"—his only form of address for the officers of his suite—drew out a note-book, seized a pencil and took down, "by way of memorandum," to the slow, precise and certain dictation of the King, the wording of a letter, a report or a scheme relating to the multifarious operations in which Leopold II. was interested. Contrary to the majority of monarchs, who take with them on their holidays a regular arsenal of papers and a very library of records, Leopold carried in the way of reference books nothing but a little English-French dictionary, which he slipped into the pocket of his overcoat and consulted for the purpose of the

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voluminous correspondence which he conducted in connection with Congo affairs :

"It is no use my knowing English thoroughly," he confessed to me, one day. "Those British officials sometimes employ phrases of which I do not always grasp the full meaning and scope. I must fish out my lexicon ! "

On the other hand, he needed no assistance to work out his complicated and gigantic financial combinations. He possessed, if I may say so, the bump of figures. For hours at a time, he would indulge in intricate calculations; and his accounts never showed a hesitation or an erasure. In the same way, when abroad, he treated affairs of State with a like lucidity. If he thought it useful to consult a specialist in certain matters, he would send for him to come to where he was, question him and send him away, often after teaching the expert a good many things about his own profession which he did not know before. And the King thereupon made up his mind in the full exercise of his independent and sovereign will :

"My ministers," he would say, with that jeering air of his, "are often idiots. But they can afford the luxury: they have only to do as I tell them."

Leopold II. did not always, however, take this view of the constitutional monarchy. For instance, a few months before his death, one of his ministers was reading a report to him in the presence of the heir presumptive—now King

Albert—when the wind, blowing through the open window of the royal writing-room, sent a bundle of papers, on the King's desk, flying over the carpet. The minister was rushing forward to pick them up, when the King caught him by the sleeve and, turning to his nephew, said :

" Pick them up yourself."

And, when the minister protested :

" Leave him alone," whispered Leopold. " A future constitutional sovereign must learn to stoop ! "

An autocrat in his actions, he affected to be a democrat in his principles.

It matters little whether his methods were reprehensible or not : history will say that Leopold II. was to Belgium the artisan of an unequalled prosperity, although it is true that he was nearly always absent from his country. The fact is that he loved France at least as well as Belgium. He loved the Riviera and, above all, he loved the capital. He had the greatest difficulty in dragging his white beard away from the Paris radius; and, when, by chance, it was eclipsed for a week or two, it continued to figure in the magazines, in the illustrated and comic papers and on the posters that advertised cheap tailors, tonic pills or recuperative nostrums.

Leopold II., therefore, was a Parisian personality in the full glory of the word. True, he never achieved the air of elegance that distinguished Edward VII. You would have looked for him in vain on the balcony of the club, on the asphalt of the boulevards, in a stage-box at the theatre, in the paddock at Longchamp. But, should you happen to meet in the Tuileries Gardens, in the old streets of the Latin Quarter, or, more likely still, along the quays a man wrapped in a long dark ulster, wearing a pair of goloshes over his enormous boots and a black bowler on his head, carrying in his hand an umbrella that had seen better days and under his arm a bundle of yellow-backed books or a knick-knack of some sort packed up anyhow in a newspaper; should you catch sight of a lean and lanky Ghent burgess rooted in silent contemplation of the front of the Louvre, or the porch of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, or the gates of the École des Beaux-Arts; should you perceive him haggling for a musty old tome at the corner of the Pont des Saints-Pères and counting the money twice over before paying, then you could safely go home and say :

" I have seen the King of the Belgians."

I often accompanied him on these strolls, in the course of which the artist and book-lover that lay hidden in him found many an occasion for secret and silent joys; for the King, who hated music, who bored himself at the theatre, and who despised every manifestation of the art of to-day, had a real passion for old pictures, fine architecture, rare curiosities and . . . flowers.

" Monsieur le commissaire," he would often say, with his fondness for official titles, in his strong Belgian accent, " we will go for an excursion to-day with monsieur l'officier."

And the " excursion " nearly always ended by taking us to some old curiosity-shop, or to the Musée Carnavalet, or to the flower-market on the Quai de la Tournelle.

In the later years of his life, however, he had to give up his walks in town : he was attacked by sciatica, which stiffened his left leg and prevented him from walking except with the aid of two sticks or leaning on his secretary's arm.

So familiar a figure did he become that he was ridiculed in the music-halls and in the scandal-mongering press; caricatures of him were displayed in all the newsvendors' windows. This stupid and sometimes spiteful interest in his movements was a positive affliction to him. We did our best, of course, to prevent his seeing the satirical drawings in which he figured in attitudes unbecoming to the dignity of a king; but we did not always succeed. Fortunately, his sense of humour exceeded any annoyance which he may have felt. Remembering that he possessed an astonishing double in the person of an old Parisian called M. Mabille, he never failed to exclaim when, by some unlucky chance, his eyes fell upon a caricature of his royal features :

" There, they're teasing that unfortunate M. Mabille again ! And how like me he is ! Lord, how like me he is ! "

His habit of icy chaff made one feel perpetually ill at ease when he happened to be in a conversational vein. One never knew if he was serious or joking. This tall, rough-hewn old man had a trick of stinging repartee under an outward appearance of innocent good-nature, and, better than any one that I have ever met, understood the delicate art of teaching a lesson to those who ventured upon an unseemly familiarity in his presence.

One evening, at a reception which he was giving to the authorities in his châlet at Ostend, the venerable rector of the parish came up to him with an air of concern and, drawing him respectfully aside, said :

" Sir, I feel profoundly grieved. There is a rumour, I am sorry to say, that Your Majesty's private life is not marked by the austerity suited to the lofty and difficult task which the Lord has laid upon the monarchs of this earth. Remember, Sir, that it behoves kings to set an example to their subjects."

And the worthy rector, taking courage from the fact that he had known Leopold II. for thirty years, preached him a long sermon. The penitent, adopting an air of contrition, listened to the homily without moving a muscle. When, at last, the priest had exhausted his eloquence :

" What a funny thing, monsieur le curé ! " murmured the King, fixing him with that cold glance of his from under his wrinkled eyelids. " Do you know, people have told me exactly the same thing about you! . . . Only I refused to believe it, you know!"[1]

That was a delicious sally, too, in which he indulged at the expense of a certain Brazilian minister who was paying his first visit to court, and who appeared to be under the impression that the King was hard of hearing. At any rate, he made the most extraordinary efforts to speak loud and to pronounce his words distinctly. The King maintained an impassive countenance, but ended by interrupting him:

"Excuse me, monsieur le ministre," he said, with an exquisite smile. "I'm not deaf, you know: it's my brother!"

Picture the diplomatist's face!

Lastly, let me recall his caustic reply to one of our most uncompromising radical deputies who was being received in audience, and who, falling under the spell of King Leopold's obvious intelligence, said to him, point-blank:

"Sir, I am a republican. I do not hold with monarchies and kings. Nevertheless, I recognize your great superiority and I confess that you would make an admirable president of a republic!"

"Really?" replied the King, with his most ingenuous air. "Really? Do you know, I think I shall pay a compliment in your style to my physician, Dr. Thirier, who is coming to see me presently. I shall say, 'Thirier, you are a great doctor and I think you would make an excellent veterinary surgeon!'"

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[1] The late King of the Belgians shared the national peculiarity of interlarding his French with a succession of *savez-vous.—Translator's Note.*

The poor opinion which he entertained of the republic, as this story would appear to show, did not prevent him from treating it with the greatest respect. Of all the foreign sovereigns, Leopold II. was certainly the one who kept up the most cordial relations with our successive presidents. At each of his visits to Paris, he never failed to go to the Élysée. He called as a neighbour, as a friend, without even announcing his visit beforehand. When M. Fallières was elected president at the Versailles congress, the first visit which he received, on his return to the Senate, where he was then living, was that of Leopold II.

Nevertheless, whatever personal sympathy he may have felt for France, the King of the Belgians always turned a deaf ear to sentimental considerations; and there is no reason why we should ascribe to such considerations the very marked courtesy which he showed to the official republican world. In my opinion, this attitude is due to several causes. In the first place, he reckoned that France was a useful factor in the development of Belgian prosperity, and that it was wise to increase the economic links that united the two countries. On the other hand, what would have become of his colonial enterprise in the Congo, if France had taken sides with England, which was displaying a violent hostility against him ? Lastly, this paradoxical monarch, who always governed through Catholic ministries at home, because that was the wish expressed by the majority of votes, was, I firmly believe, a free-thinker at heart and was pleased to find that our rulers entertained views which corresponded with his own secret tendencies.

The fact is that Leopold II. looked at everything from two points of view : that of practical reality and that of his own selfishness. The King had in his veins the blood of the Coburgs mixed with that of the d'Orléans, two highly intelligent families, but utterly devoid of sentiment or sensibility; and he treated life as an equation which it was his business to solve by any methods, no matter which, so long as the result corresponded with that which he had assigned to it beforehand.

He had an extraordinarily observant mind, was marvellously familiar with the character of his people, its weaknesses and its vanities, and played upon these with the firm, yet delicate touch of a pianist who feels himself to be a perfect master of his instrument and of its effects. His cleverness as a constitutional sovereign consisted in appearing to follow the movements of public opinion, whereas, in reality, he directed and sometimes even provoked them.

Thus, in 1884, when the violent reaction of the Catholics against the anti-clerical policy of M. Frère-Orban culminated in the return of the conservatives to power, one might have thought that the crown, which until then had supported the liberal policy and favoured the secularization of the schools, would find itself in a curiously difficult position, and that the check administered to M. Frère-Orban would amount to a check administered to the King himself. Not at all. Leopold II., sheltering himself behind his duties as a constitutional sovereign, became, from one day to the next, as firm a supporter of the Catholic party as he had been, till then, of the liberals. Nay more, I have learnt since that he had a hand in the change of attitude on the part of parliament and the nation. As I have hinted above, his personal sympathies lay on the side of the liberal party; but, with the perspicacity that was all his own, he was not slow in perceiving the spectre of budding socialism which was beginning to loom behind Voltairean liberalism. He suspected its dangers; and he did not hesitate to give a sudden turn to the right to the ship of State of which he looked upon himself as the responsible pilot. And this position he maintained until the end of his days, without, for a moment, laying aside any of his personal preferences.

2

My first meeting with Leopold II. dates back to 1896. The King had gone to the Riviera, accompanied by his charming daughter, Princess Clémentine, now Princess Napoleon, who, from that time onward, filled in relation to her father the part of the Antigone of a tempestuous old age. I shall never forget my surprise when the King, who had made the long railway-journey from Brussels to Nice without a stop, said to his chamberlain, Baron Snoy, as they left the station :

" Send away the carriage, monsieur le chambellan. We'll go to the hotel on foot. I want to stretch my legs a bit ! "

We walked down the Avenue Thiers, followed by an inconvenient little crowd of inquisitive people. Just as we were about to cross a street, a landau drove up and obliged us to step back to the pavement. As it passed us, the King solemnly took off his hat : he had recognized Queen Victoria sitting in the carriage and apparently astounded at this unexpected meeting.

When we reached the Place Masséna, again the King's hat flew off : this time it was the Dowager Empress of Russia entering a shop.

" The place seems crammed with sovereigns," he said, with his mocking air. " Whom am I going to meet next, I wonder ? "

I saw little of him during this first short stay which he made at Nice, for I was at that time attached to the person of the Queen of England and had to transfer the duty of protecting King Leopold to one of my colleagues. I used to meet him occasionally—always on foot—on the Cimiez road ; I would also see him, in the afternoon, taking tea at Rumpelmayer's with his two daughters, the Princesses Clémentine and

Louise, and his son-in-law, Prince Philip of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

These family-meetings around a five o'clock tea-table marked the last auspicious days of peace, which was more apparent than real, among those illustrious personages. When Leopold II. returned to the Riviera, two years later, he had quarrelled, in the meanwhile, with his daughter Louise, who herself had quarrelled with her husband; he had ceased to see his daughter Stéphanie, who had married Count Lonyay; and he met his wife, Queen Marie-Henriette, as seldom as he possibly could. Princess Clémentine was the only one who still found favour with this masterful old man, who was so hard upon others and so indulgent to himself; and she continued, with admirable devotion and self-abnegation, to surround him with solicitous care and to accompany him wherever he went.

I never met a more smiling resignation than that of this princess, who took a noble pride in the performance of her duty. Nothing was able to discourage her in the fulfilment of her filial mission: not the rebuffs and caprices which she encountered on her father's side, nor the frequently delicate and sometimes humiliating positions which he forced upon her, nor even the persistency with which, until his dying day, he thwarted the secret inclinations of her heart.

It has been said that at one time he thought of giving her the Prince of Naples—now King of

Italy—for a husband, and that he abandoned the idea in consequence of the stubborn opposition which the plan encountered on the part of exalted political personages. I do not know if he ever entertained this plan; on the other hand, I feel pretty sure that, some years ago, he would have liked the Count of Turin for a son-in-law, and that negotiations were opened to this effect with the Italian court. But the most invincible of arguments—the only one that had not been taken into account—was at once opposed to this project: the princess's affections were engaged elsewhere. She loved Prince Victor Napoleon and had resolved that she would never marry another man. Of course I was not present at the scene which the plain expression of this wish provoked between father and daughter; but I understand that it was of a violent character. From that day, the prince's name was never mentioned between them. The princess continued, as in the past, to fill the part of an attentive and devoted daughter; she continued scrupulously to perform her duties as "the little Queen," as the Belgians called her after 1904, the year of her mother's death, when she began to take Marie-Henriette's place at public functions; she continued to succour the poor and nurse the sick with greater solicitude than ever; and she was seen, as before, driving her pony-chaise in the Bois de la Cambre. Only, in the privacy of her boudoir, the moment she had a little time to herself, she would immerse her-

PRINCESS VICTOR NAPOLEON (PRINCESS CLÉMENTINE OF BELGIUM).

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self in the study of historical memoirs of the Napoleonic period.

To tell the truth, I believe that, if Prince Victor had not possessed the grave fault, in Leopold's eyes, of being a pretender to the French throne, the King would have ended by giving to the daughter whom he adored the consent for which she vainly entreated during six long years. But the King was an exceedingly selfish man; he was eager, for the reasons explained above, to preserve good relations with the French Republic; and he refused at any price to admit the heir of the Bonapartes into his family. The result was that he ended by conceiving against the prince the violent antipathy which he felt for any person who stood in his way and interfered with his calculations. I remember realizing this one morning at the station at Bâle, where I had gone to meet him. The King was waiting on the platform for the Brussels train, when I suddenly caught sight of Prince Victor leaving the refreshment-room. I thought it my duty to tell the King.

"Oh, indeed!" he said. "Let's go and look at the engines."

And he strode away.

Can it have been because he was sure of meeting neither Prince Victor nor the members of his own family on the Riviera that he resolved, at the end of his life, to fix one of his chief residences in the south of France? I will not go so far as that. I am more inclined to believe that the old King, who was a passionate lover of sunshine, flowers and freedom, found in that charming and easy-going country the environment most in harmony with his moods and tastes.

As early as 1898, he resolved to lay out for himself a paradise in the wonderful property, known as Passable, which he had purchased near Nice, with its gardens sloping down to the Gulf of Villefranche. He devoted all his horticultural and architectural knowledge, all his sense of the beautiful and picturesque, to its embellishment. Tiberius achieved no greater success at Capri. Year after year, he enlarged it, for he had a mania for building and pulling down. He also had the soul of a speculator. None knew better than he how to bargain for a piece of land; he would bully, threaten and intimidate the other side until he invariably won the day. Thereupon he used to indulge in childish delight:

"It's all right," he would say, with a great fat chuckle. "I have done a capital stroke of business!"

And I am bound to admit that he spared neither time nor energy when he scented what he called "a capital stroke of business." I can still see him, one afternoon, leaving M. Waldeck-Rousseau's villa at the Cap d'Antibes, near Cannes, where he had gone to pay the prime minister a visit, and perceiving, on the road leading to the station, a magnificent walled-in park that looked as if it were abandoned.

"Who owns that property?" he asked suddenly.

"An Englishman, Sir, who never comes near it."

"We have time to look over it," said the King, "before the train leaves for Nice. Somebody fetch the gardener!"

The gardener was not to be found, but the gate was open. Leopold II. walked in without hesitation, followed by Baron Snoy, my colleague, M. Olivi, and myself, hurried along the deserted paths and praised the beauty of the vegetation; but, when it became time to go, we discovered, to our dismay, that some one had locked the gate while we were inside. There was no key, no possibility of opening it. We called and shouted in vain. Nobody appeared. The train was due before long; the King began to grow impatient. What were we to do? Olivi had a flash of genius. He ran to a shed, the roof of which showed above the nearest thicket, and returned with a ladder:

"If Your Majesty does not mind, you will be able to get over the wall."

The King accepted impassively and the ascent began. Baron Snoy went up first, then I; and the King, in his turn, climbed the rungs, supported by Olivi. Baron Snoy and I, perched on the top of the wall, hoisted the King after us. We were joined by Olivi; and then a dreadful thing happened: the ladder swayed and fell! There we were, all four of us, astride the wall, swinging our legs, without any means of getting down on the other side.

" We look like burglars," said the King, with a forced laugh.

There was nothing for it but to jump. The distance from the top of the wall to the roadside slope was not great; and Baron Snoy, Olivi and I succeeded in falling on our feet without great difficulty. The King, however, who limped in one leg and lacked agility, could not think of it.

Then Olivi, who certainly proved himself a most resourceful man that day, solved the problem. He suggested that the King should climb down upon our shoulders. The King accordingly let himself slide on to the shoulders of Baron Snoy, who passed him on to Olivi's back, while I caught hold of his long legs and deposited his huge feet safely on the ground!

Some years later, seeing Olivi at the station at Nice:

" I remember you, M. Olivi," said Leopold II. " You took part in our great gymnastic display at Antibes."

" I did, Sir."

" Well, do you know, M. Olivi, there is no need for me to climb the wall now. I have the key; the property is mine."

The whole man is pictured in this anecdote. Even as he gave numberless signs of avarice and meanness in the material details of life, so he displayed an almost alarming extravagance once it became a question of satisfying a whim, although he would carefully calculate the advantages of any such whim beforehand. And to increase the number of his landed properties was with him a genuine monomania, a sort of methodical madness.

At the bottom of his character lay certain precepts which belonged to the great middle class of 1840, and which had survived from the middle-class education imparted to him in his youth. It was thus that he was brought to think that the amount of a man's wealth is to be measured by the amount of real estate which he possesses. He fought shy of stocks and shares, because of the frequent fluctuations to which they are subjected. On the other hand, he felt a constant satisfaction—I was almost saying a rapturous delight—in the acquisition of land, in turning his cash into acres of soil and investing his fortune in marble or bricks and mortar, because he looked upon these as more solid and lasting.

It goes without saying that, during his long visits to the south, he escaped as much of the official and social drudgery as he could. He saw very little of his illustrious cousins staying on the Riviera; avoided dinners and garden-parties; and, when not at work, spent his time in long and interminable walks, or else went and sat on a bench in some public garden or by the sea, and there steeped himself in his reflections. Sometimes, when he was in a hurry to get back, he would take the tram or hail a fly, always picking out the oldest and shabbiest.

One day, at his wish, I beckoned to a driver on the rank at Nice.

"No, no, not that one," he said. "Call the other man, over there: the one with the horse that looks half-dead."

"But the carriage seems very dirty, Sir," I ventured to remark.

"Just so: as he drives such an uninviting conveyance, he must be doing bad business; we must try and help him."

Leopold II. had a knack of performing these sudden and unexpected acts of kindness.

He was a sceptic to the verge of indifference and yet entertained odd antipathies and aversions. For instance, he hated the piano and was terrified of a cold in the head. Whenever he had to select a new aide-de-camp, he always began by asking two questions:

"Do you play the piano? Do you catch cold easily?"

If the officer replied in the negative, the King said, "That's all right," and the aide-de-camp was appointed; but, if, by ill-luck, the poor fellow returned an evasive answer, his doom was told: he went straight back to his regiment.

This inexplicable dread of the *corizza* had attained such proportions that, during the last years of the King's life, the people about him—including the ladies—discovered a simple and ingenious expedient for obtaining a day's leave when they wanted it: they simply sneezed without stopping. At the third explosion, the old sovereign gave a suspicious look at the sneezer and said:

"I sha'n't want you to-day."

And the trick was done.

He had his idiosyncrasies, like most mortals. For instance, he used to have four buckets of sea-water dashed over his body every morning, by way of a bath; he expected partridges to be served at his meals all the year round; and he had his newspapers ironed like pocket-handkerchiefs before reading them: he could not endure anything like a fold or crease in them. Lastly, when addressing the servants, he always spoke of himself in the third person. Thus he would say to his chauffeur, "Wait for *him*," instead of "Wait for *me*." Those new to his service, who had not been warned, were puzzled to know what mysterious person he referred to.

A strange eccentric, you will say. No doubt; although these oddities are difficult to understand in the case of a man who displayed the most practical mind, the most lucid intelligence and the shrewdest head for business, the moment he was brought face to face with the facts of daily life. But, I repeat, to those who knew him best he appeared in the light of a constant and bewildering puzzle; and this was shown not only in the peculiarity of his manners, but in the incongruity of his sentiments. How are we to explain why this King should feel an infinite love for children, this stern King who was so hard and sometimes so cruel in his treatment of those to whom by rights he ought never to have closed his heart nor refused his indulgence? Yet the tall old man worshipped the little ones. They were almost the only creatures whose greetings he returned; and he would go carefully out of his way, when strolling along a beach, rather than spoil their sand-castles. How are we to explain the deep-seated, intense and jealous delight which he, so insensible to the softer emotions of mankind, felt at the sight of the fragile beauty of a rare flower? How are we to explain why he reserved the kindness and gentleness which he so harshly refused to his wife and daughters for his unfortunate sister, the Empress Charlotte, whose mysterious madness had kept her for forty-two years a lonely prisoner within the high walls of the Château de Bouchout? And yet, every morning of those forty-two years, he never failed, when at Laeken, to go alone across the park to that silent dwelling and spend two hours in solitary converse with the tragic widow. Each day, with motherly solicitude, he personally supervised the smallest details of that shattered existence.

3

The King never allowed any outsider to interfere in his affairs, whether public or private. He discussed none of his schemes before it was completed and before he had drawn up his plan of execution down to the minutest details:

"It shall be so," he used to declare; and no one ever dreamt of opposing his will so plainly expressed.

It was in this way that he conducted his enormous Congo enterprise entirely by himself. The different phases of this business are too well known for me to recapitulate them here. One of them, however—the first phase—has been very seldom discussed and deserves to be recalled, for it throws a great light not only upon the King's conceptive genius, but also upon his diplomatic astuteness and his amazing cynicism.

In 1884, Leopold II., who had for years been obsessed by the longing to lay hands upon the Congo territory, promoted an international conference in order to spoil the West-African treaty which had lately been concluded between Great Britain and Portugal, and which hindered the realization of his secret ambitions. He now conceived the subtle and intelligent idea of inducing the congress to proclaim the Congo an independent State, with himself as its recognized sovereign.

There was only one person in Europe possessed of sufficient authority to bring about the adoption of this daring plan; and that was Bismarck. Bismarck was the necessary instrument; but how was he to be persuaded? Faced with this difficulty, Leopold II. hit upon the idea of sending to Berlin a journalist, whom he knew to be a clever and talented man, with instructions to capture the Iron Chancellor's confidence. Leopold coached this journalist, a gentleman of the name of Gantier, to such good purpose that, as the result of a campaign directed from Brussels by the King himself, M. Gantier managed within a few months to insinuate himself into Bismarck's immediate surroundings, to interest him in the Congo question, and to prove to him that Germany would derive incomparable benefits from proclaiming the independence of the Congo and entrusting its administration to a neutral sovereign like the King of the Belgians.

The stratagem was successful from start to finish. The Congress of Berlin, on the motion of the chancellor, proclaimed the Congo an independent territory with Leopold II. for its sovereign. We know the result : the Congo is at this day a Belgian colony. Leopold, in a word, had " dished " Prince Bismarck.

Unfortunately for the King's memory, whereas the masterly fashion in which he succeeded in forcing the hand of Europe in this matter is bound to meet with unreserved praise, history will be less inclined to congratulate him upon the means which he employed to impose his sovereign authority and his colonizing schemes upon the Congo.

I will not take upon myself either to justify or to criticize his policy in the " Free State." It is a question outside my province. Nevertheless, I consider that I am in duty bound to tell what I know about the matter with the impartiality of a chronicler who has confined himself to hearing and observing the things that were said and done around him.

I was with the King at the time, following upon the revelations of the missionaries, when the campaign was started in England against the atrocities committed by the Belgian authorities in the Congo. He affected an attitude of the most utter indifference to these attacks. I knew, however, that they bothered him and caused him a certain uneasiness, because of the prejudice which they might rouse against his enterprise.

While he refrained from communicating his impressions to me, he opened his mind to certain political personages whom he honoured with his confidence :

" When a man has accepted the task of civilizing a country," he would say to them, " and has devoted his intelligence, his work and his fortune to it, as I have done, surely he is entitled to some credit."

It was a poor argument, I admit, in reply to the terrible accusations which had been hurled against the administration of the Congo.

To tell the truth, Leopold II. made no endeavour to defend himself. When his representatives in the Congo Free State were reproached with employing Draconian measures, tending towards the gradual extermination of the natives, his answer was that these methods were indispensable in dealing with a race which refused to allow the wealth of its country to be developed, and which offered a systematic opposition, in every conceivable way, to the work of civilization! And the King would quote precedents in favour of his theory. Thus, one day, he said to a French journalist who was interviewing him on the subject:

"The Americans are uniting with the English in accusing me of cruelty to the natives of the Congo, all because I consider it expedient to reduce them to impotence and because I wish to throw open to civilization their magnificent territories, which have remained uncultivated far too long. Now I am only following the example of the Americans themselves, when they gradually expelled the Indians from the United States, and of the English, when they made themselves masters of India."

Leopold II., as the reader sees, made no attempt to meet the accusations with a positive denial: he simply sought to explain his methods. The fact is that, as I have said before, he was inaccessible to humanitarian considerations in matters of politics. He kept his eyes fixed exclusively on the object which he proposed to attain: the means, as long as they were effective, left him indifferent.

Is this equal to saying that he approved of all that was done in his name? I do not think so. The measures which he had enacted gave the Belgian concessionaries the right to exact labour from the natives without remuneration, thus instituting a sort of slavery, and granted unlimited powers to the officials. They were necessarily bound to lead to intolerable abuses, abuses also prompted, in the case of both officials and concessionaries, by the fear of solitude and by the intoxication that results from the exercise of absolute power. Nevertheless, I must add, in defence of the King, that it was difficult, if not impossible, for him to know precisely what acts were being committed in the Congo in his name. The impartial elements which were indispensable, if he was to be kept informed with exactitude, were entirely lacking. The English reports, which he was naturally inclined to charge with exaggeration, were contradicted by the Belgian reports submitted to him, which evidently extenuated facts of which they were not able to deny the reality.

The reproach that might be levelled against him with the greatest amount of justice was that he did not at the very outset appoint the committee of enquiry whose conclusions, as everybody knows, recognized the necessity of immediate reforms in the administration of the Congo. But Leopold II., as I have said, did not believe in advice or advisers. He had to feel threatened in his security before he would consent to allow any outside interference in this matter of the Congo, which he looked upon as a purely personal matter.

As he drew nearer the tomb, his worries and activities increased. It was as though he had received a mysterious warning to tell him that his years were now numbered and that he must hasten the realization of his numerous and immense schemes. Apart from his work on the Congo, which was violently attacked both by politicians of all parties abroad and by the opposition at home, his other vast undertakings also became the object of fierce criticism on the part of his adversaries, who considered that he was neglecting the political evolution of the country in order to devote himself entirely to his plans for transforming the town of Brussels. He was so well aware of this state of opinion that, when the burgomaster of the capital, his friend and fellow-worker M. Mott, came to congratulate the King on his last birthday, Leopold said :

" Let us hope that I shall have time to complete my work."

" Why not, Sir ? " replied M. Mott. " You and I are of the same age; and you are stronger and haler than I am."

" Never mind, monsieur le bourgmestre : remember that, when one of us closes his eyes, the other will have to keep his open ! "

It was written, in fact, that Leopold II. should be called away before fully realizing his colossal dreams and settling his intricate personal affairs. He was working up to the very moment of his death; as everybody knows, his mind remained clear to the end, nor did his hostility towards his family waver for an instant. He died as he had lived, inaccessible, haughty and sceptical.

CHAPTER X

THE ENGLISH ROYAL FAMILY

1

WHILE compiling these recollections, I have more than once had occasion, in passing, to mention different "faces" belonging to the Royal Family of England. They occur at most of the sovereign courts; for it was no empty phrase that used to describe Queen Victoria as "the grandmother of Europe." There was never a truer saying. Even as, in whichever direction beyond-seas we turn our eyes, we behold the British flag waving in the breeze, in the same way, if we study the pedigree of any royal house, we are almost always certain to discover an English alliance.

The long years which I spent in the service of Queen Victoria and the confidence with which she honoured me by admitting me to her intimacy enabled me to become acquainted with several members of that large, united and gracious family; and I am bound to say that not one of them has forgotten me. They all deign to give me a little corner in the memories of their childhood and youth; they are good enough to remember that, in the old days, when they came to Nice, Aix, Biarritz or Cannes to pay their duty to their grandmother and to bring her the youthful tribute of their smiles, there was always, in the old-fashioned landau that carried the good Queen along the country roads, or walking beside her donkey-chair, somebody who shared the general gaiety and whom the Queen treated with affectionate kindness. That " somebody " was myself.

I thus had the honour of seeing King George V., when he was still wearing the modest uniform of a naval lieutenant, and, later, of knowing Queen Mary, when she was only Duchess of York and Cornwall. And I hope that she will permit me, in this connection, to recall an incident that diverted Queen Victoria's little circle for a whole evening. It happened during a visit which the Duchess of York was paying to the Queen at Nice. I had informed the venerable sovereign that the " ladies of the fishmarket "—one of the oldest corporations at Nice—wished to offer her some flowers; and the Queen asked the Duchess of York to receive them in her stead and to express her sincere thanks for their kind wishes.

The good women handed the Duchess their bouquets; and I then saw that they were shy and at a loss what to do or say next. So I whispered to them:

" Go and kiss that gentleman over there," pointing to Colonel Carrington, the Queen's equerry. " That is by far the best speech that you could make ! "

The ladies evidently approved of my suggestion, for they forthwith, one and all, flung themselves upon the colonel's neck; and he, though flurried and a little annoyed, had to submit with the best grace possible to this volley of kisses under the eyes of the princess, who laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks.

When I apologized to him afterwards for the abominable trick which I had played him :

" Ah," he sighed, " if only they had been good-looking ! "

The fact is that none of the ladies evoked the most distant memories of the Venus of Milo !

Thanks to the recollections of those bygone years, of which any number of charming and amusing stories could be told, I was no stranger to the Duke and Duchess of York, when, after the accession of King Edward VII., they were raised to the title of Prince and Princess of Wales and travelled across France, under my protection, on their way to Brindisi, where they were going to take ship for India.

" I will present you to the prince myself," said Princess May, with exquisite and simple kindliness, when she saw me waiting for them in the railway-station at Calais. And she continued, " George, this is M. Paoli : you remember him, don't you ? "

" I remember," said the prince, giving me his hand, " how much my grandmother liked you and the affection which she showed you. I need hardly say that we feel just the same to you ourselves."

I could not have hoped for a more cordial welcome from the prince whose features bore so striking a resemblance to those of the Emperor of Russia, whom I had just left.

This journey was a particularly pleasant one for me, as it enabled me to forgather once more with an old and faithful friend in the person of the prince's secretary, of whom I had seen a great deal at the time when he was private secretary to Queen Victoria, and who now occupies the same position under King George V.: I refer to Sir Arthur Bigge, now Lord Stamfordham.

Sir Arthur belongs to that race of servants of the monarchy whose zeal and devotion cease only with their death. He had a curious adventure at the time of the interview between Queen Victoria and the late M. Félix Faure at Noisy-le-Sec. The story has never been told before; and I have no hesitation in publishing it, because it does great credit to the generosity of feeling of the then President of the Republic.

The Queen was on her way to Nice, that year, and had expressed a wish to meet M. Félix Faure, whom she did not know. The interview was arranged to take place during the stop of the royal train at Noisy Junction; and it had acquired a certain solemnity owing to the political circumstances of the moment. We began by witnessing a long private conversation between the Queen and the President through the windows of the royal saloon-carriage, after which, in accordance with the usual etiquette, they presented the members of their respective suites. When it came to Colonel Bigge's turn, the Queen said to M. Faure, without the least idea of mischief:

" My private secretary, Sir Arthur Bigge, who enjoys all my confidence and all my esteem. Besides, I expect you know his name : it was he who accompanied the Empress Eugénie on her sad pilgrimage to Zululand and helped her to recover the body of her poor son."

The President bowed, without moving a muscle of his face or uttering a word; and Sir Arthur, greatly embarrassed by the terms of the presentation, thought the best thing to do was to lie low and keep out of the way. How great, therefore, was his surprise when, after everybody had been presented, he heard his name called by M. Félix Faure.

" What can he want with me ? " he asked, rather uneasily.

As soon as they were alone, the President said to him, point-blank:

" As a Frenchman, I wished to thank you for the devotion which you have shown to one of our fellow-countrywomen in circumstances so terrible for her. You behaved like a man of heart. I congratulate you."

M. Faure had the knack of enhancing the character of his office and winning the respectful sympathy of foreigners by happy flashes of inspiration of this kind.

But I am wandering from my subject. To return to the Prince of Wales, the cordiality of the reception which he gave me at Calais promised me a charming journey. In point of fact, I was able, during the run across France, to perceive how fond both the prince and princess were of simplicity and gaiety. They were evidently delighted to be going to India, although the princess could not accustom herself to the idea of leaving her children. As for the prince, he was revelling beforehand in the length of the voyage:

" One never feels really alive except on board ship," he said to me. " What do you think, M. Paoli ? "

" I think, Sir," I replied, " that I must ask Your Royal Highness to allow me to differ. When I am on board ship, I sometimes feel more like dying."

" You're not the only one," he retorted, with a side-glance at one of his equerries, who stood without wincing.

The prince liked teasing people; but his chaff was never cruel and he accompanied it with so much kindness that there was no question of taking offence at it. At heart, the prince had remained the middie that he once was, a " good sort," full of fun, full of " go," fond of laughing and interested in everything.

We chatted in the train until very late at night, for I did not leave the prince until we reached Modane, the station on the Italian frontier where my service ended.

2

I saw him next at the Queen of Spain's wedding, and again in 1908. The prince and princess had just spent a week in Paris, for the first time in their lives, and were returning to England delighted with their stay. The special train had hardly left the Gare du Nord, when the Hon. Derek Keppel, who was with the prince, came to me in my compartment:

"M. Paoli," he said, "I am commanded by Their Royal Highnesses to ask you to give them the pleasure of your company to luncheon."

I at once went to the royal saloon. The prince was chatting with M. Hua, his sons' French tutor, a very agreeable and scholarly man, whom he treated as a friend; the princess was talking to Lady Eva Dugdale, her lady-in-waiting. It goes without saying that the conversation was all about Paris and the impressions which the prince and princess had received from their trips to Versailles, Chantilly, Fontainebleau and Chartres.

"I can understand my father's admiration and affection for France," said the prince to me. "It is a magnificent country and an interesting people. I am glad that the *entente cordiale* has strengthened the bonds of friendship between the two nations. I must come and see you oftener."

While the prince was saying these pleasant things, I was surprised to observe his valet depositing two apparently very heavy hampers on the floor in the middle of the carriage; but my astonishment was still greater when I saw the princess herself open one of the hampers and take out a table-cloth, plates, a chicken, tumblers—in short, a complete lunch.

" By the way," said the prince, " I forgot to tell you, there's no restaurant-car in the train, so we shall have a picnic here. It will be much better fun ! "

And it was. The man put out two folding-tables which were in the carriage; and then, at the princess's suggestion, we all helped to lay the cloth ! One looked after the plates, another the glasses, a third the knives and forks, while the princess herself carved the cold fowl.

When everything was at last ready, we sat down around this makeshift luncheon-table and, with a splendid will, did justice to our meal, which, I may say, was excellent. The proprietor of the Hôtel Bristol, who had packed the hampers, had had the happy thought of adding a couple of bottles of champagne; and these were the cause of an incident that crowned the gaiety of this merry lunch. The prince declared that he would open them himself. Asking for the first bottle, he prepared to draw the cork with a thousand cunning precautions; but he certainly failed to reckon with the extraordinary impatience of that accursed cork, which was no sooner freed of its restraining bonds than it escaped from the prince's hands and went off like a pistol-shot, while the wine drenched the princess's dress.

The prince was very sorry, but the princess laughed the thing off and declared that " it didn't stain." She had her skirt wiped down at once with water; and the luncheon finished as gaily as it began.

As I was taking leave of her on board the ship that was to convey the illustrious travellers from Calais to Dover:

" Do come and see us in England," she said. " I should like to show you my children : you have never met them."

" Madam," I replied, " I would do so with pleasure, if my duties allowed me to take a holiday. Meanwhile, may I respectfully remind Your Royal Highness that, on the last journey, you promised me the young princes' photograph ? "

" That's true," she answered, " I forgot all about it. But, this time—wait." And, taking her handkerchief from her waistband, the princess made a knot in it. " Now I'm sure to remember," she added, with a smile.

And, two days later, I received a splendid photograph of the children, adorned with their mother's signature.

Nearly three years have passed since this last journey and I have not had the honour of seeing King George and Queen Mary since. Nevertheless, they are good enough to think of me sometimes, as will be seen by the following affectionate letter which my friend Sir Arthur Bigge sent me on my retirement :—

"*Marlborough House, Pall Mall, S.W., Feby. 28th,* 1909.

"MY DEAR PAOLI,

"Your letter to me of the 24th inst. has been laid before the Prince and Princess of Wales, who received with feelings of deep regret the announcement that you had asked for and obtained permission to retire. Their Royal Highnesses are indeed sorry to think that they will never again have the advantage of your valuable services so efficiently and faithfully rendered, and which always greatly conduced to the pleasure and comfort of Their Royal Highnesses' stay in France. At the same time the Prince and Princess rejoice to know that you will now enjoy a well-merited repose after forty-two years of an anxious and strenuous service: and they trust that you may live to enjoy many years of health and happiness.

"Their Royal Highnesses are greatly touched by your words of loyal devotion, and thank you heartily for these kind sentiments.

"As to myself, the thought of your retirement reminds me that a precious link with the past and especially with the memory of our great and beloved Queen Victoria is now broken. I remember so well the first time we met at Modane when Her Majesty was travelling to Italy, and you will ever be inseparably connected in my thoughts with those happy days spent in Her Majesty's service in France. I can well imagine what interest you will find in writing your book of reminiscences.

"Good-bye, my dear Paoli, and believe me to be
"your old and devoted friend,
"ARTHUR BIGGE."

3

I intended, in this chapter, to speak of those members of the royal family with whom my long and frequent service about the person of Queen Victoria gave me the occasion to come into contact; and I must not omit to mention a princess, now no more, a woman of lofty intelligence and great heart, whom life did not spare the most cruel sorrows after granting her the proudest destinies. I refer to the Empress Frederick of Germany, eldest daughter of Queen Victoria and mother of William II.

I made her acquaintance in rather curious circumstances. It was at the naval review held by Queen Victoria in 1897, on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee. As a special favour, I was invited to see this magnificent sight on board the *Alberta*, and I was gazing with wondering eyes at the majestic fleet of ironclads through which the royal yacht had just begun to steam, when I heard a voice behind me say, in the purest Tuscan:

"*Bongiorno, Signor Paoli.*"

I turned round. A woman, still young in bearing, though her face was crowned with grey hair under a widow's bonnet, stood before me with outstretched hand:

"I see," she said, smiling at my surprise, "that you do not know me. I am the Empress Frederick. I have often heard of you, and I wanted to know you and to thank you for your attentions to my mother."

I bowed low, thinking what an uncommon occurrence it must be for a Frenchman to meet a German empress, talking Italian, on an English boat; and she continued:

"I know that you are a Corsican; and that is why I am speaking to you in your native language, which I learnt at Florence, and which I love as much as I do my own."

The Empress Frederick, in fact, was remarkably well-educated, as are all the English princesses. She knew French as fluently as Italian and hardly ever spoke German, except to her chamberlain, Count Wedel. I was able to see, during our conversation, that she took a lively interest in my country; she asked me a thousand questions about France and particularly about French artists:

"I am a great admirer of M. Detaille's works," she said, and added, after a pause, "He is very like the Emperor, my son. Don't you think so?"

I thought it the moment for prudence:

"I have never had the honour of seeing the Emperor William," I replied, "and therefore I cannot tell Your Imperial Majesty if the resemblance has struck me."

She then changed the conversation and spoke of the celebrations which were being prepared in her mother's honour.

The only other occasion on which I saw her was two years later, when she crossed French soil to go from England to Italy. This time, she was nervous and ill at ease :

"Can you assure me," she asked, as she landed at Calais, "that I shall meet with no unpleasantness between this and the Italian frontier ?"

"Why, what are you afraid of, Ma'am ?" I asked.

"You forget, M. Paoli, that I am the widow of the German Emperor, and that, as such, I am no favourite in this country. Suppose I were recognized ! There are memories, as you know, which French patriotism refuses to dismiss."

She was alluding not only to the events of 1870, but to the bad impression made in Paris by the visit which she had paid, a few years earlier—without any ulterior motive—to the ruined palace of Saint-Cloud, forgetting that it had been destroyed and sacked by the Prussians. I reassured her, nevertheless, and said that I was prepared to vouch for the respect that would be shown her.

The journey, I need hardly say, passed off without a hitch. The Empress, with her suite, entered the private saloon-carriage of her brother, the Prince of Wales, which was coupled to the Paris mail-train and afterwards transferred to the

Nice express, for the Empress was travelling to Bordighera, on the Italian Riviera.

She dared not leave her carriage during the short stop which was made in Paris; but, when we arrived at Marseilles the next morning, she said:

"I should awfully like to take a little exercise. I have been eighteen hours in this carriage!"

"But please do, Ma'am," I at once replied. "I promise you that nothing disagreeable will happen to you."

She thereupon decided to take my advice. She stepped down on the platform and walked about among the passengers. She was received on every side with marks of deferential respect—for, of course, her incognito had been betrayed, as every incognito should be—and suddenly felt encouraged to such an extent that, from that moment, she alighted at every stop. Gradually, indeed, as her confidence increased, she took longer and longer in returning to her carriage, so much so that she very nearly lost the train at Nice; and, when I took leave of her at Bordighera, she said, as she gave me her hand to kiss:

"Forgive me, my fears were absurd. Now, I have but one wish, to make a fresh stay in France. . . . Who knows? Perhaps next year."

I do not know what circumstances prevented her from fulfilling her hopes; and the next time I heard of her was at Queen Victoria's funeral. I was astonished not to see her there and asked the reason of her chamberlain, Count Wedel, who sat beside me in St. George's Chapel at Windsor.

"Alas," he said, "our poor Empress is confined to her bed by a terrible illness! Think how she must suffer: her whole body is one great aching sore!"

A few months later, she was dead.

4

I had had but a more or less fleeting vision of this amiable sovereign, whose fate, though not so tragic as that of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, was but little happier. On the other hand, I had opportunities of coming into much more frequent and constant contact with two of her sisters, Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein and Princess Henry of Battenberg.

Closely though these two princesses resemble each other in the admirable filial affection which they showed their mother, they are entirely different in disposition. Whereas the elder, who is generally known as the Princess Christian, is always ready to talk to those about her, Princess Beatrice, the younger, is comparatively silent and almost self-contained, but without the least affectation: in fact, I have seldom met a princess more simple in her habits or more easy of access to poor folk. This contrast in their attitude towards life comes, I think, from a difference in their temperaments and tastes. The Princess Christian has inherited the homely virtues of the German princesses: she interests herself mainly in philanthropic and social questions. The Princess Henry, on the contrary, feels a marked attraction for literature and the arts, which she cultivates with a real talent; and, like all those who are endowed with an active brain, she loves to isolate herself from the outside world.

I must say that I never knew the Princess Christian as well as I did her sister, for the very good reason that she did not accompany Queen Victoria to France as often as the Princess Henry. Her arrival at Nice was usually later than that of the Queen and she very seldom remained until the end of Her Majesty's stay.

I remember, however, that, one year, they returned to England together; and, in this connection, I have a story to tell which goes to show how keenly alive the great of this earth can be to the smallest attentions paid them. The royal train, which had left Nice in the morning, pulled up, at five o'clock in the afternoon, as usual, at a little country-station between Avignon and Tarascon, in order to enable the Queen to take her tea without being inconvenienced by the jolting of the wheels. Seeing me pacing the platform, the Princess Christian stepped from the carriage and walked up and down beside me. In the course of our conversation, she began to talk of her children:

" Think of it ! " she said, with a certain melancholy. " My daughter Victoria will be thirty years old to-morrow—for to-morrow is her birthday. How time flies ! "

Princess Victoria was also one of the travelling-party. As soon, therefore, as the Princess Christian had left me, I scribbled a telegram to the special commissary at Caen, in Normandy, where we were to stop for a few minutes, next day, on our way to Cherbourg, and told him to order a bouquet and hand it to me as the train passed through.

The following morning, when we entered the station at Caen, I found my bouquet awaiting me : a modest nosegay, consisting of all the rustic flowers of the fields, which my worthy commissary had had gathered in the morning dew. I at once presented it to Princess Victoria, wishing her many happy returns of her birthday; and I cannot say which of the four of us—the Queen, the two princesses or I—was most touched by the affectionate gratitude which they all three expressed to me.

5

But, as I have said above, of all Queen Victoria's daughters, the one whom I knew best was the Princess Henry of Battenberg. In point of fact, she hardly ever left her august mother's side, from the day when her married bliss received so cruel a blow in the tragic death of her husband, and when distress of mind found a refuge and peace in the love of that mother, whose heart was always filled with the most delicate compassion for every sorrow.

A close link had been formed between those two women : the Princess Henry had become the confidante of Queen Victoria's thoughts and was also, very often, the intermediary of her acts of discreet munificence. At Nice, she occupied the magnificent Villa Liserb, close to the hotel at which the Queen resided. Here I watched the games and the physical development of the princess's four children, Prince Alexander, Prince Maurice, Prince Leopold and little Princess Ena, little thinking that I should live to see the heavy crown of Charles V. and Philip II. placed upon the pretty, golden hair which was then still tied back with pale-blue ribbons. Day after day, for many years, I saw those same children hail their grandmother's appearance with cries of delight.

The daily drive in the grounds of the Villa Liserb was one of Queen Victoria's favourite pleasures. She went there in her chair drawn by Jacquot, the grey donkey, solemnly led by the Hindoo servant, whose gaudy attire, like a monstrous flower, struck a loud note of colour against the green of the surrounding foliage. Slowly and smoothly, with infinite care, the little carriage advanced along the garden-paths which the pines, eucalyptus and olive-trees shaded with their luxurious tresses. The Queen, holding the reins for form's sake, would cast her eyes from side to side in search of her grandchildren, who were usually crouching in the flower-beds or hiding behind the trees, happy in constantly renewing the innocent conspiracy of a surprise—always the same—which they prepared for their grandmother, and which consisted in suddenly bursting out around her.

Or else a shuttlecock or a hoop would stray between Jacquot's legs.

"Stop, Jacquot!" cried the children.

And Jacquot, best-tempered of donkeys, would stop all the more readily as he knew that his patience would be rewarded with a lump of sugar.

The Princess Henry of Battenberg spent long hours in this wonderful, smiling oasis, dividing her time between the education of her children, which she supervised and directed in person, and her own intellectual pursuits, to which she devoted herself ardently. She used to draw and paint very prettily, at that time; and she never forgot to take her sketch-book with her when accompanying the Queen on her drives in the neighbourhood of Nice. She sat and sketched while tea was being prepared in some picturesque spot where the royal carriage halted for the purpose.

She was a first-rate musician, played the harmonium on Sundays in the chapel of the Hôtel Regina and often entered the Catholic churches during the services, in order to listen to the sacred music, which she preferred above all others. In this way, she came to appreciate more particularly the talent of a young organist called Pons, now a distinguished composer, who, at that time, used to play the organ at the church of Notre-Dame at Nice. This artist, who was a native of the south of France, possessed a remarkable gift of improvisation which amazed the princess so greatly that she was always speaking of it to the Queen:

"You really ought to hear him," she would say.

"But he can't bring his organ to the hotel!" the Queen replied, laughing.

"Why should you not go to his church? I assure you that you will not regret it."

The Queen, who was easily persuaded by her daughter, ended by consenting to visit Notre-Dame one afternoon, on condition that she should be alone there, with her suite, during the little recital which the organist was to give for her benefit. Princess Beatrice, who was delighted at attaining her object, plied me with instructions so that the Queen might have a genuine artistic surprise:

"Be sure and see that there is no one in the church," she said to me. "And tell M. Pons to surpass himself."

I went and called on the rector and the organist. The former very kindly promised to take all the necessary steps for his church to be quite empty during Her Majesty's visit. As for M. Pons, the honour which the Queen was doing him almost turned his head. He saw himself the equal of Bach and would have accosted Mozart by his surname if he had met him in the street:

"The Queen will be satisfied, I promise you," he declared, in his southern sing-song.

Things passed very nearly as we hoped. At the hour agreed upon, the royal landau stopped before the door of the church; the Queen, accompanied by the princess and a few persons of her suite, including myself, entered the great nave, where only a few small lights shone like golden stars in the spacious darkness. When the Queen was seated in the arm-chair which I had sent on ahead, Pons began to shed floods of harmony upon us from his organ-loft above.

Nothing would have disturbed our meditation, but for a cat, an enormous black cat, which, after prowling behind the pillars, suddenly came up to the royal chair unperceived and jumped most disrespectfully into Her Majesty's lap! Picture the excitement! We drove it away. It returned. We tried to drive it away again. But it was stubborn in its affections and returned once more. Thereupon the Queen, who was more surprised than annoyed, resigned herself and accepted the curious adventure. She stroked the animal and kept it with her until the end of the recital.

6

When Princess Henry of Battenberg did not accompany her mother on her drives—which happened very rarely—she liked going to the Empress Eugénie, who treated her as a daughter, and who, as everybody knows, was the godmother of Queen Victoria Eugénie of Spain. The princess would sometimes spend the whole afternoon at the villa of Napoleon III.'s widow; one year indeed, she and Princess Ena stayed there all through the winter. It was on this occasion that I found myself placed in a very delicate position.

What occurred was this : the princess sent word to me, one day, with the Empress's consent, inviting me to dinner at the Villa Cyrnos. I was at first a little perplexed. It seemed to me a rather ticklish matter, considering my official position, to figure at the table of the ex-Empress of the French. On the other hand, to refuse the invitation seemed tantamount to insulting the daughter of the Queen of England, to whom I was accredited. At last, I resolved to swallow my scruples and accepted.

That evening, after dinner, when thanking the Empress for her kindness, I could not help saying :

" I suppose, Madame, that there are very few officials of the Republic who would have dared to sit down at Your Majesty's table."

" To be equally frank with you," the Empress at once replied, laughing, " I will ask you to believe, my dear M. Paoli, that there are also very few officials of the Republic whom I should have cared to see seated there like yourself ! "

7

I must not close the story of the periods which I spent with the royal family at Nice without recalling that, on some of those occasions, I also met the Marchioness of Lorne, now Duchess of Argyll, and the Duke of Connaught; but, to tell the truth, I only caught glimpses of them, because of the shortness of their visits.

I can also only mention quite casually the name of Queen Alexandra, for this charming lady has never stayed in France for any length of time. With the exception of two visits, of forty-eight hours each, with which she honoured Paris when she went to France with King Edward, she has confined herself to passing through our country on her way to Denmark or to join the royal yacht at Marseilles or Genoa. On each of the journeys during which I was attached to her person, she gave me every sign of that captivating and bewitching kindness of which she alone appears to possess the secret. I also remember perceiving, as do all those who approach her, the touching affection that unites her to her sister, the Dowager Empress of Russia. Each time that she parted from her at Calais, to proceed either to Copenhagen or to the south, while the Empress Marie Feodorovna was returning to St. Petersburg, she never failed to say to me, in a voice full of anxiety:

"M. Paoli, do take the greatest care of my sister. Watch over her attentively. I shall not know a moment's peace until I hear that she has arrived at the end of her journey."

The years have passed and it is not without pride that I reflect upon the fact that I have known four generations of that glorious royal family of England!

But, alas, it makes me feel no younger!

CHAPTER XI

THE KING OF CAMBODIA

1

THE King of Cambodia was, so to speak, my last "client," at least the last of those whom I was "protecting" for the first time, for he had never set foot in France when, three years ago, I beheld him, in the bright light of a fine morning in June, greeting with a loud laugh the port of Marseilles, the gold-laced officials who had come to receive him, the soldiers, the sailors, the porters and the regimental band.

For he loved laughing. Hilarity with him was a habit, a necessity; it burst forth like a flourish of trumpets, it went off like a rocket at anything or nothing, suddenly lighting up his elderly monkey-face and revealing amidst the dark smudge that formed his features a dazzling keyboard of ivory teeth.

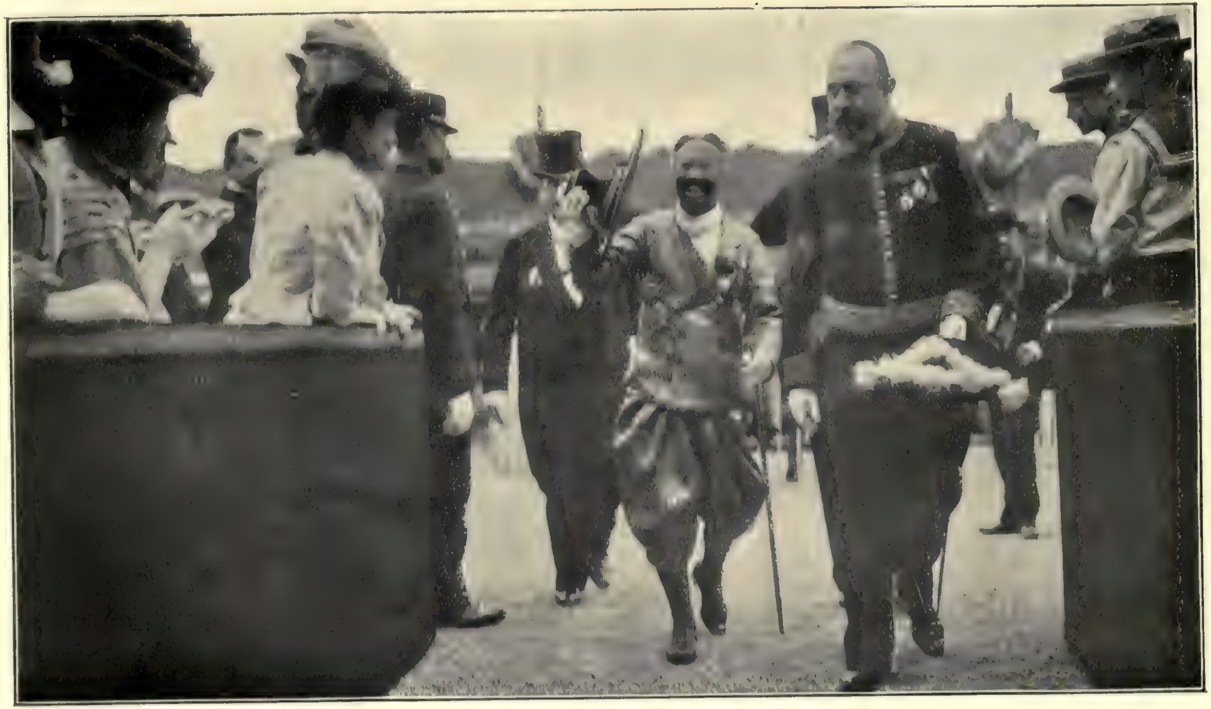
Sisowath King of Cambodia struck me as a little yellow, dry, sinewy man who had been snowed upon, for amid his hard stubble of shiny black hairs there gleamed, over the temples, patches of white bristles that bore witness to his five-and-sixty summers. He still looked young, because of the slightness of his figure;

and his costume consisted of a singular miscellany of Cambodian and European garments.

From the knees to the waist, his dress suggested the east. Starting from the frontier formed by his belt, the west resumed its rights and set the fashion . . . of the day before yesterday! His feet were clad in shoes resembling a bishop's, with broad, flat buckles, whence rose two spindle-shanks confined in black silk stockings and ending in a queer pair of breeches of a thin, silky, copper-coloured material, something midway between a cyclist's knickerbockers and a woman's petticoat and known as the *sampot*, the national dress of Cambodia. Over these breeches of uncertain cut fell the graceless tails of an eighteenth-century dress-coat, opening over a shirt-front crossed by the broad ribbon of the Legion of Honour. Lastly, this astonishing get-up was topped with a rusty tall hat, dating back to the year 1830, which crowned the monarch's head.

All this made him look like a carnival reveller who had come fresh from a fancy-dress ball. Nevertheless, he took himself very seriously; and the French government treated him with every consideration, for he represented a valuable asset in the exercise of our protectorate over Cambodia.

Those acquainted with the traditions of the Cambodian court will know that, in consenting to leave his realms for a time in order to go to France, he had broken every religious and



THE KING OF CAMBODIA ARRIVING AT MARSEILLES.

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political law. To appease the wrath of Buddha and relieve his own conscience, before leaving his capital, Pnom-Penh, he had sent magnificent offerings to the tombs of the Kne-Kne kings, bathed in lustral water prepared by the prayers of sixty-seven bonzes, invoked the emerald statue of the god Berdika, and accepted at the hands of the chief Brahmin a leaf of scented amber, by way of a lucky charm.

It was really impossible to surround himself with more potent safeguards; and he had every reason to be in a good humour, although he had flown into a great rage on the passage at seeing his suite abandoning themselves to the tortures of sea-sickness :

" I forbid you to be sick ! " he shouted to them. " Those are my orders; am I the King or am I not ? "

Distracted by the impossibility of obeying, they took refuge in the depths of the steamer and did not reappear on deck until the ship approached the Straits of Messina. And the saddened sovereign was made to realize for the first time that he was not omnipotent. The fact made so great an impression on his mind that, from that time forward, he became excessively and almost inconveniently polite. He shook hands with everybody he saw, beginning with the flunkeys at the Marseilles Prefecture, who lined the staircase as he went upstairs.

2

Keen as was the interest taken by the public in Sisowath, it paled before the curiosity aroused by his dancing-girls. They formed an integral part of that extraordinary royal suite, in which figured three of his ministers, four of his sons, his daughter, two sons of King Norodom, his predecessor, and eleven favourites, accompanied by a swarm of chamberlains, ladies of the bedchamber and pages.

On the other hand, amid the disorder of that Oriental horde, the *corps de ballet* constituted a caste apart, haughty, sacerdotal and self-contained. The twenty dancers came to France preceded by a great reputation for beauty. It may have been the result of beholding them in a different setting, under a different sky; but this much is certain, that they did not appear to me in the same light in which they had been depicted to us by enthusiastic travellers.

Sisowath's dancing-girls are not exactly pretty, judged by our own standard of feminine beauty. With their hard and close-cropped hair, their figures like those of striplings, their thin, muscular legs like those of young boys, their arms and hands like those of little girls, they seem to belong to no definite sex. They have something of the child about them, something of the young warrior of antiquity, and something of the woman. Their usual dress, which is half feminine and half masculine, consisting of the famous *sampot* worn in creases between their knees and their hips and of a silk shawl confining their shoulders, crossed over the bust and knotted at the loins, tends to heighten this curious impression. But, in the absence of beauty, they possess grace, a supple, captivating, royal grace, which is present in their every attitude and gesture; they have a perfume of fabled legend to accompany them, the sacred character of their functions to ennoble them; lastly, they have their dances full of mystery and majesty and art, those dances which have been handed down faithfully in the course of the ages, and whose every movement, whose every deft curve remains inscribed on the bas-reliefs of the ruins of Ankor. For these reasons, they are beautiful, with the special beauty that clings to remote, inscrutable and fragile things.

They are all girls of good extraction, for it is an honour much sought after by the noble families of Cambodia to have a child admitted to the King's troupe of dancers. Contrary to what has sometimes been asserted, the dancing-girls do not form part of the royal harem; they are looked upon as vestals: virginal and radiant, they perform, in dancing, a more or less religious rite.

When they accompanied Sisowath to France, they were under the management of the King's own eldest daughter, the Princess Soumphady, an ugly, cross-grained old maid, who ruled them with an iron hand. The "stars" were four principal dancers, whose names seemed to have been picked, like the king's leaves of scented amber, in some sacred grove of Buddha's mysterious realm: they were called Mlles. Mih, Pho, Nuy and Pruong.

3

When the whole party were landed, they had to be put up; and this was no easy matter. The Marseilles Prefecture was hardly large enough to house the King's fabulous and cumbrous retinue. We distributed its members over some of the neighbouring houses; but they spent their days at the Prefecture, which was then and there transformed into the camp of an Asiatic caravan. The ante-rooms and passages were blocked with pieces of luggage each quainter than the other. Heaped up promiscuously were jewel-cases, dress-trunks, cases of opium, bales of rice and sacks of coal, for the Cambodians, fearing lest they should fail to find in Europe the coal which they use to cook their rice, had insisted, at all costs, on bringing with them two hundred sacks, which now lay trailing about upon the Smyrna rugs!

When, on the evening of his arrival, I pushed my way through this medley of incongruous baggage to present myself to the King, of whom I had caught but a passing glimpse on the Marseilles quays, M. Gautret, the colonial administrator who had travelled with our guests, said to me:

" His Majesty is at dinner, but wishes to see you. Come this way."

Shall I ever forget that audience ? Sisowath sat at a large table, surrounded by his family, his ministers, his favourites and his dancing-girls, while, squatting in a corner on the floor, were half-a-dozen musicians—His Majesty's private band—scraping away like mad on frail-sounding instruments. The King was eating salt fish which had been prepared for him by his own cooks. He was the only one to use a knife and fork. The others did not care for such luxuries; at intervals, a waiter handed round a large gold bowl filled with rice, into which ministers, favourites and dancing-girls dipped their hands, subsequently transferring the contents to their mouths.

When M. Gautret had mentioned my name and explained the nature of my functions, the King, who was gloating over his loathsome fish, looked up, gave me his hand and, with his everlasting noisy laugh, flung me a few vapid monosyllables :

" Glad! . . . Friend! . . . Long live France!"

Our conversation went no further on that day. The next morning, we visited together the sights of Marseilles and its Colonial Exhibition. Sisowath, though very loquacious, was not astonished at anything, or at least pretended not to be. His dancers and favourites, on the other hand, were astonished at everything. They pawed the red-silk chairs for ever so long before venturing to sit upon the extreme edge, so great was their fear of spoiling them : most often, after a preliminary hesitation, they would end by settling down upon the floor, where they felt more at home. And yet they were not devoid of tact, as they showed when I took them, at the King's wish, to see the fine church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde, which, from the top of its rock, commands a view of the city, the surrounding country and the sea. They wanted to go up to the sanctuary and entered it with the same respectful demeanour which they would have displayed in the most sacred of their own pagodas. When we explained to them that the thousands of ex-votos which adorn the walls of the chapel represent so many tokens of pious gratitude, their eyes, like the King of Thule's, filled with tears and they suddenly prostrated themselves, just as they might have done before the images of their own Buddha.

During this time, the King, who had fished out a pair of white gloves and a white tie and adorned his *sampot* with an emerald belt, stood smiling at the "Marseillaise," which was being performed in his honour.

Until then, I had enjoyed but a foretaste of the life and manners of the Cambodian court. The stay which Sisowath and his suite were about to make in Paris was to enlighten me on this subject for good and all.

After three days' driving through the streets of Marseilles, the royal caravan set out for the capital, where the French government had resolved to give it an official reception and to entertain it at the expense of the nation. With this object in view, the government had hired a private house in the Avenue Malakoff and prudently furnished it from the national repository with chairs and tables "that need fear no damage."

Meanwhile, the Colonial Office had appointed me superintendent-in-chief of this novel "palace" and I had to take up my abode there during the whole of our royal guest's stay. The result was that, during the three weeks which I spent amid these picturesque surroundings, I enjoyed all the attractions of the most curiously exotic life that could possibly be imagined.

The bedroom allotted to me opened upon the passage containing the King's apartments; so that I may be said to have occupied a front seat at the permanent and delicious entertainment provided by the Cambodian court for the benefit of those admitted to its privacy.

What struck me first of all was the indiscreet familiarity of His Majesty's family and favourites. Princes, ministers and favourites spent their lives in the passages and walked in and out of my room with an astonishing absence of constraint and in the airiest of costumes. If I happened to be there, they paid no attention to my presence: they explored the room, poked about in the corners, tried the springs of my bed, asked me for cigarettes, examined my brushes and combs, smiled and went away.

When I was out, they entered just the same, emptied my cigar- and cigarette-boxes, sat down on my carpet and exchanged remarks that may have been jocular for all I know : I never found out.

Anxious to avoid any sort of friction, I made no complaint. I contented myself with locking up my personal belongings and replacing my boxes of havanas with boxes of penny cigars; but my plunderers held different views: the ladies, especially, who had learnt to distinguish between good cigars and common "*Sénateurs*," expressed their rage and vexation with violent gestures and resolved thenceforth to give me the cold shoulder—which was more than I had hoped for.

There remained another drawback to which I had, willy-nilly, to submit until the end. It consisted of Sisowath's unpleasant habit of walking up and down the passages at night, talking and laughing with his suite, while his orchestra tinkled out the "national" airs to an accompaniment of tambourines and cymbals. It was simply maddening; and, when I tried to make a discreet protest, I was told that, as His Majesty took a siesta during the day, he had no need for sleep at night. The argument admitted of no reply; and I had to accept the inevitable.

On the other hand, I enjoyed a few compensations. I was invited, from time to time, to assist at the King's toilet when he donned his gala clothes to go to an official dinner or a ceremony of one kind or another. After he had finished his ablutions—for he was always very particular about his person—his wives proceeded to dress him. They helped him into a gorgeous green and gold *sampot* and a brocaded tunic, and put round his throat a sort of necklace resembling the gorget of a coat of mail and made of dull gold set with precious stones, ending at the shoulders in two sheets of gold that stuck out on either side like wings. They next girt his waist, arms and ankles with a belt and bracelets encrusted with exquisite gems. Lastly, they took away his rusty and antiquated old "topper" and gave him in exchange a wide Cambodian felt hat, surmounted by a kind of three-storied tower running into a point, adorned with gold chasings and literally paved with diamonds and emeralds. Thus attired, Sisowath looked very grand: he resembled the statue of a Hindoo god removed from its pagoda.

Nevertheless, western civilization began stealthily to exert its formidable influence over his tastes, if not his habits. We had not been a week in Paris before our guest thought it better, on his afternoon excursions, to replace the *sampot* with the conventional European trousers and his out-of-date cut-away with a faultless frock-coat. But for his yellow complexion, his slanting eyes and his woolly hair, he would have looked a regular dandy!

Ever eager to appear good-natured and polite, he kissed the daughters of the hall-porter at the

Colonial Office each time he went to the Pavillon de Flore, and shook hands with the messengers at the Foreign Office and with all the salesmen at the Bon Marché, which he made a point of visiting. Again, when passing through the Place Victor-Hugo, he never failed to take off his hat with a great flourish to our national poet. Lastly, I had the greatest difficulty in keeping him from sending sacred offerings to the tomb of Napoleon I., " whom we hold in veneration in Cambodia," he explained to me through the interpreter. Hearing, on the other hand, that European sovereigns are accustomed to leave their cards on certain official personages, he asked me to order him a hundred, worded as follows :

Preas Bat Somdach Preas Sisowath
Chom Chakrepongs.

4

Nevertheless, in spite of the ever-fresh surprises which Paris had in store for him and of their undoubted attraction for his mind, the King soon began to feel a certain lassitude :

“ Paris,” he said to me, “ is a wonderful, but tiring city. The houses are too high and there are too many carriages. How is it that you still allow horse-carriages ? If I were the master here, I would abolish them and allow nothing but motors.”

When he had visited the public buildings and seen the sights, and been to Fontainebleau and Versailles and Compiègne, and had the mechanism of the phonographs and cinematographs explained to him, he began to bore himself. He then thought of his dancing-girls, whom he had left behind at Marseilles, and sent for them to Paris, on the pretext of exhibiting them at a garden-party given by the President of the Republic at the Elysée. One fine morning, they all landed at the Gare de Lyon, a little bewildered, a little flurried, in the charge of the grim Princess Soumphady, who was dressed in a violet *sampot*, with a stream of diamonds round her neck. They arrived looking like so many lost sheep, accompanied by their six readers, their eight singers, their four dressers, their two comedians and their six musicians.

The dancers’ advent created quite a sensation in the district of the Avenue Malakoff. They were quartered opposite the royal "palace," in a building at the back of a courtyard, and when, at last, good King Sisowath saw them from his balcony, a broad smile of happiness lit up his yellow face.

They rehearsed their ballets every morning, in a large room that did duty as a theatre. I was allowed to look on, as a special favour, and I was thus able to watch pretty closely those curious and amazingly artistic little creatures and their dances.

Their ballets always began with a musical prelude performed upon brass and bamboo instruments. Then, while some of the women struck up a religious chant and others clapped their hands in measured time, the dancers left the group one by one, shooting out and meeting in the ring; and a regular fanciful, childish drama was suggested by their movements, their gestures and their attitudes, which contrasted strangely with the sacerdotal repose of their features. They looked, at one time, like large, living flowers; at another, like automatic dolls.

The dances provided an odd medley of Moorish and Spanish steps. Sometimes, the stomach would sway to and fro, as though one were watching a dance of Egyptian almes; at other times, the legs quivered and the dancer stamped her feet, raised her arms, jerked her hips, as though she meant to give us some Andalusian *jota* or *habanera*. And nothing allowed the inner feelings of the soul to penetrate through those faces, which seemed inanimate beneath their fixed smiles; yet what suggestive mimicry was there, what harmonious poses and what marvellous costumes!

The Cambodian ballet-girls, when dancing in public, wear clothes that are simply fairy-like. They have bodices of silk stitched with gold and adorned with precious stones. These bodices are very heavy and are fitted upon them and sewn before each performance, so that they form as it were a new skin and clearly reveal the undulations of the body.

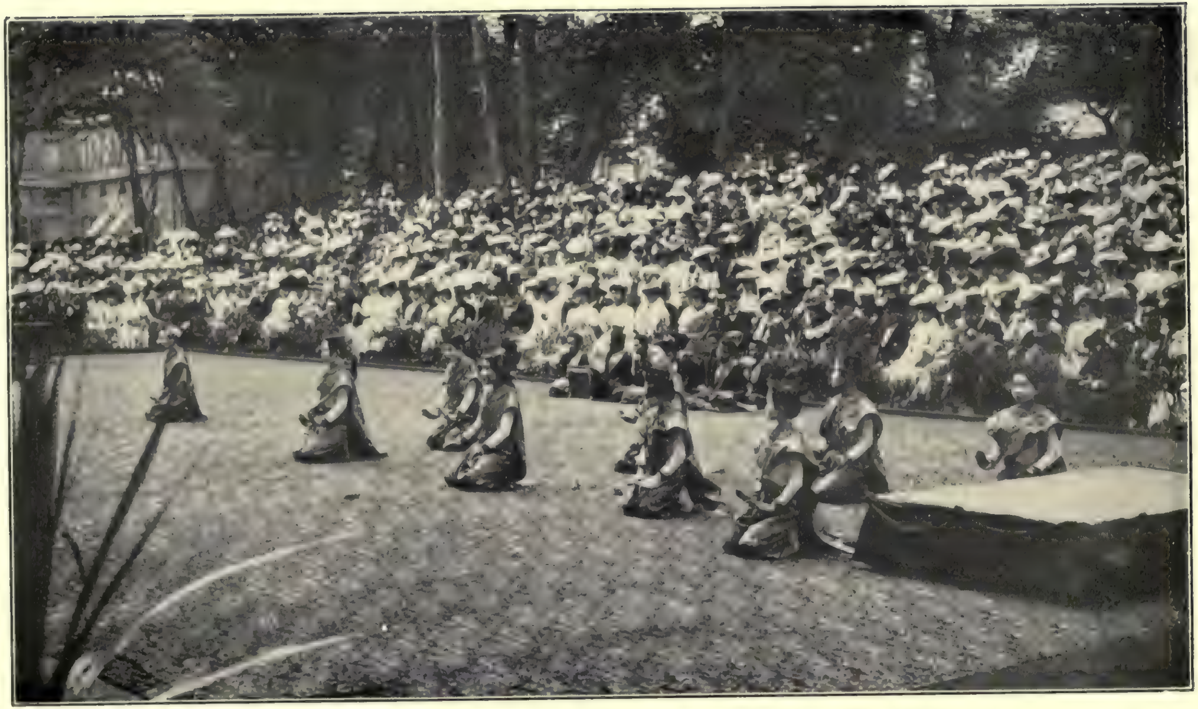
The dressers take two or three hours to clothe the dancers, after which they paint the girls' faces and deck them out with bracelets, necklaces and rings of priceless value. Sometimes, also, the dancers' fingers are slipped into long, bent, golden claws, which describe harmonious curves in space.

Lastly, the head-dress consists of either the traditional *pnom*—a sort of pointed hat, all of gold and fastened on by clutches that grip the head—or a wreath of enormous flowers, or else of a pale-tinted silk handkerchief rolled low over the temples.

The dancers and their dances achieved, as may be imagined, no small success, first at the Élysée and afterwards in the Bois de Boulogne, where a gala performance was given, in the open-air theatre of the Pré Catelan, by the light of the electric lamps. Betweenwhiles, they took drives through Paris, which gave rise to all sorts of astonished and enthusiastic manifestations on their part, much to the delight of their guides, for they had the mental attitude of little girls; and, when, after a week, they had to go back to Marseilles, where they formed the principal attraction at the Colonial Exhibition, their despair was something immense. It was as much as we could do to console them by presenting them all with mechanical rabbits and unbreakable dolls.

And the King, once more, was bored. He was so thoroughly bored that, a few days after the departure of his ballet-girls, he resolved to go and spend a couple of days at Nancy, in order to see a dozen or two young Cambodians who had been attending the local industrial school for the last twelvemonth. The organizing of this visit was very troublesome, for the King had acquired a taste for military display and insisted upon being received at Nancy with full honours, such as he had been used to in Paris. Worse still, the trip very nearly ended in disaster, entirely through Sisowath's own fault.

The inhabitants of Nancy, amused and delighted by the show of Oriental luxury that met their eyes, gave the King an enthusiastic ovation far in excess of his expectations. His gratitude was such that, on the evening of his arrival, he took it into his head to manifest his delight by flinging handfuls of silver through the windows of the Prefecture to the crowd that stood cheering



THE KING OF CAMBODIA'S DANCING-GIRLS.

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him on the Place Stanislas! The reader can picture the effect of this beneficent shower. Suddenly, loud cries and shouts were heard and a regular battle was fought in front of the Prefecture, for one and all wished to profit by the royal largesse.

I at once rushed up to the King and begged him to stop this dangerous game. But Sisowath, who was madly diverted by the sight, positively refused to yield to my entreaties. He even asked to have a thousand-franc note changed for gold.

Seeing that persuasion was of no avail, I took a quick and bold resolve. I had him removed from the window by force, undeterred by the insults with which he overwhelmed me in the Cambodian tongue.

But I had not yet come to the end of my emotions ; a serio-comic incident followed apace. Suddenly evading the watchfulness of my inspectors, who dared not detain him like a common malefactor, Sisowath escaped, darted down the stairs four steps at a time, opened a window on the ground-floor and, with hoarse cries, began to pitch into the square all the louis d'or which he had in his possession. The moment he heard us coming, quick as lightning he was off and flew to another window. For a quarter of an hour, a mad steeple-chase was kept up through all the rooms of the Prefecture, amid the roars of the excited crowd in the streets.

Fortunately, the King soon grew tired and accepted his defeat. As for me, I naturally looked upon my disgrace as assured. But Sisowath, thank goodness, was not vindictive. The next morning, he gave me his hand, and, bursting into loud laughter, contented himself with saying :

" Very funny ! "

5

A week later he took ship at Marseilles, with his court, to return to Cambodia. When I said good-bye to him on the deck of the steamer, he appeared heart-broken at having to leave our country. Heart-broken, too, seemed the little dancing-girls squatting at the foot of the mast, with their mechanical rabbits and their unbreakable dolls—the last keepsake to remind them of their stay in Paris—which they squeezed fondly in their arms.

When, at length, the hour of parting had struck, good King Sisowath, greatly moved, called me to his side :

" Here," he said, " Present . . . for you."

And he handed me a parcel done up in a pink silk handkerchief.

As soon as I was on shore, I hastened to open it : to my great confusion, it contained a splendid *sampot* made of fine cloth of gold. The King of Cambodia had presented me with his State breeches, which were all that remained to me of my last " client " and of my Oriental dreams !

CHAPTER XII

QUEEN VICTORIA

1

HAD I listened to what a poet has so well named the instincts of the heart, I would have inscribed the name of Queen Victoria at the head of this book. Bonds of respectful attachment and fervent gratitude attach me to her for all time. She was gifted in the highest degree with both courage and delicacy. She was the personification of one of the most potent qualities of the English character: loyalty in friendship. Once she had bestowed her confidence upon any one, were he the humblest or the mightiest, she continued to show him that confidence, in all and every circumstance, so long as he remained worthy of it.

This was well known; and therefore the venerable sovereign's esteem became a valuable talisman for him who was honoured with it. I may say that, for over twenty years, it constituted my real recommendation to the sovereigns and princes to whose persons I was attached; and that is why I determined to conclude this volume with my recollections of the lady who, to no small extent, furnished me with the opportunity of writing it, and who governs my reminiscences from the depths of an already distant past, even as her bowed and smiling image beams from its gilt frame upon the other portraits that surround me as I write.

Too much, of course, has been written about Queen Victoria for me to aspire to set up as the historian of her reign and life. Other pens, endowed with greater authority than mine, have told us of the momentous influence which she wielded, for half a century, over the destinies of the nation of which she always remained the most vivid expression and, at the same time, the noblest and most respected symbol; they have told us how, little by little, her single efforts tended to develop into her universal fame. Lastly, her own correspondence, published by the pious thought of her son, the late King Edward, has revealed to us, in a striking fashion, the inmost recesses of her heart as a woman and a queen.

My ambition, therefore, will be limited to recalling the sovereign whom I knew in the decline of her life, the queen who was known only to the few privileged persons admitted to her family circle, the woman who, with so much simplicity, with so much candour and indulgent kindness, personified, in all the grace of her secret charm, the traditional type of "the dear old lady."

She had made it her habit, as everybody knows, to spend a few weeks of each year in France. The state of her health was not, as I at first thought, the only reason that induced her to make this annual journey. She loved our country not as other sovereigns do, from politeness or because she found it easier there than elsewhere to rest from the fatigues of official life : she loved it with a profound and sincere affection, to which a curious sentimentality, a sort of mysterious superstition, contributed its share. Strange and inconsistent though it may seem, this sovereign, whose strict education, whose essentially Protestant attitude of mind, whose ideas of nationality ought rather to have set her against us, relished the Latin side of our character, delighted in our easily-aroused displays of enthusiasm, admired our artistic faculties and, above all, appreciated our climate, to which she attributed curative virtues far above the common. The moment she arrived among us, she considered herself at home. Her eyes beamed with pleasure, her face lit up with content; and she thought more of the salute of a station-master who recognized her or of a nosegay presented to her by a peasant-woman than of the homage paid her by any of her fellow-sovereigns.

The mere thought that political events might interfere with her annual holiday was enough to cause her acute distress. I remember, for instance, the time of the unfortunate Fashoda incident, which happened just at the moment when she was about to start for Nice. An ill-disposed section of the press had written to cry out against the journey; and the Queen caused her hesitation and anxiety to be brought to my knowledge. Realizing the great harm which her absence—necessarily involving the absence of a large number of her subjects—was likely to do to our Mediterranean coast, I instituted a summary enquiry into the feeling of the population, as a result of which I strongly advised Her Majesty to make no alteration in her plans. Fortunately, I was not alone in this opinion: I found a valuable ally in the person of the late Lord Salisbury, who was prime minister at the time. He never wearied of repeating:

" It is more than ever essential that the Queen should go to France this year."

She came. She was a little nervous at first, but was soon reassured at perceiving that the people showed her the same respect and the same deference as before.

A few days later, when talking with the Empress Eugénie about the Anglo-French dispute, which had then reached its most acute phase, she said:

" If a war were to break out between France and England, I would ask God in His goodness to let me die first ! "

I am certain that these beautiful and touching words were the genuine expression of an absolute conviction.

She thought of us again at the end, when, a few hours before expiring, in that faint gleam of hope which lights up so many death-beds, she exclaimed:

" Oh, if I were only at Nice, I should recover ! "

By a diplomatic, but quite useless fiction, the Queen always travelled in France under the title of Countess of Balmoral. Of course, this incognito, to which she attached great importance, did not deceive a soul, inasmuch as her movements were not allowed to pass exactly unnoticed. The reader can judge for himself. As soon as her departure for the south was settled, the Foreign Office advised our Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which, in its turn, informed the minister of the interior, who at once wrote to tell me that I must hold myself in readiness to attend the august traveller. She used to arrive at Cherbourg in the evening, on board her yacht *Victoria and Albert*, and did not land until the next morning, when she took the train waiting for her on the quay. The royal train consisted of seven coaches, two of which were the Queen's private property, and was both imposing and magnificent. The Queen's saloon-carriage, padded throughout in blue silk, presented, in its somewhat antiquated splendour, the exact appearance of an old-fashioned apartment in a provincial town. Everything about it was heavy, large and comfortable. So that the Queen's sleep might not be disturbed, there were no brakes to the wheels; and the carriage was swung to perfection. Moreover, the train never travelled faster than thirty-five miles an hour by day or twenty-five miles at night. It also stopped for some time during meals and between eight and nine in the morning, to enable the Queen to dress in comfort. Lastly, it was pulled up whenever Her Majesty desired to receive some person of distinction or when dispatches reached her from the government. I used to feel as though I were travelling in a steam bath-chair; and I must confess that, in this rolling palace, the journey never appeared to me either very long or very tiring. Besides, it had the advantage of enabling us to admire the landscape at our leisure.

As soon as the Queen reached her destination, a serious responsibility devolved upon those who, like myself, had it as their duty to protect the royal residence without making a great display of force, in fact almost without visible show. Never, indeed, was the police service around an illustrious personage organized with greater reserve and discretion. Never was monarch better guarded in his palace than was Queen Victoria in an hotel quite easily accessible to the public. In fact, one might have thought that no precautions whatever had been taken; and yet the orders were explicit and it was really impossible for any one to enter the space under my supervision without first stating his business.

Soldiers mounted guard, in smart sentry-boxes, at the entrance of the hotel. The guard turned out to salute the Queen twice a day only: when she started on her long daily drive and when she returned. It was also drawn up in force on the occasion of certain official receptions and on the arrival of other foreign sovereigns who came to call on their venerable cousin of England.

An amusing mishap nearly occurred, one day, in this connection. I was going to my post in the afternoon and thought I observed an unwonted animation around the royal hotel. I quickened my pace to discover the cause; and my stupefaction was great when I saw the guard of honour standing under arms at the entrance.

My functions enabled me to know, day by day, I might almost say, hour by hour, what was set down on the programme of the Queen's receptions. Now on that day there was nothing, to my knowledge, that seemed to warrant the calling out of the guard; and I wondered what could have happened during my brief absence.

I hurried up to the officer on duty:

"What is the matter?" I asked. "Why have you turned out? Whom are you going to salute?"

"I really don't know, M. Paoli," said the officer, who, in his turn, was astonished at my surprise. "M. Dossé, the Queen's courier, sent down word to us. They are expecting a crowned head, they say."

What could the mystery mean? I at once sent for the Queen's courier:

"Whom on earth are you expecting?" I asked, pointing to the men drawn up in line.

"Why, don't you know?" he replied.

"I do not."

"Well, it's the Empress Eugénie!"

I gave a jump:

"What!" I exclaimed, in dismay. "You

want the soldiers of the republic to give the salute to the ex-Empress of the French ? "

" I confess," said M. Dossé, " that I did not look at the matter from that point of view."

" I dare say. . . . But, if you lost no time before, there is still less time to lose now. . . . Dismiss, dismiss as quick as you can ! " I cried to the officer.

I was only just in time. The soldiers were not yet out of sight when the Empress arrived :

" You seem very much excited, M. Paoli," she said to me, with a smile.

I told her the reason.

" Oh, how glad I am that you avoided that incident ! " she exclaimed. " The newspapers would have been sure to hold me responsible; and my position in France, which is already so delicate, would only have suffered in consequence."

As for me, I am convinced that people would not have failed to see in this simple misunderstanding a political plot, an attempt to restore the imperial family, or goodness knows what !

2

The Queen's household, when she came to France, consisted almost invariably of the same persons. Their tact and amiability have left a lasting and charming impression upon people who, like myself, were called upon to see a great deal of them. Unquestionably, the first and most important of them all was General Sir Henry Ponsonby, who, for a very long period, filled the most arduous offices at the court and who occupied a special place in Her Majesty's confidence. At once active and intelligent, open and discreet, he combined the functions of keeper of the privy purse and private secretary to the Queen. When he died, the responsibilities of his post were considered so heavy that it was divided and the privy purse and private secretary were appointed separately. Lieutenant-colonel Sir Fleetwood Edwards was invested with the first office and Lieutenant-colonel Sir Arthur Bigge, now Lord Stamfordham, with the second. One of the two always accompanied the Queen to Nice and was seconded either by Colonel, now Sir Arthur Davidson, or by Lieutenant, now Lieutenant-colonel Sir Frederick Ponsonby, son of the general. Both these gentlemen were equerries to Her Majesty. Lieutenant-colonel Sir William Carington, on the other hand, fulfilled the functions of controller of the little court at Nice, while Sir James Reid, that delightful Scotsman, whom I have mentioned in the chapter on King Edward VII., occupied the position of private physician-in-ordinary to Her Majesty.

Among the ladies of the bedchamber who succeeded one another in attendance upon the Queen were Lady Southampton, Lady Churchill, the Countess of Antrim and Countess Lytton; while Miss Harriet Phipps, the bedchamber-woman-in-ordinary, never left the sovereign.

In addition to these court dignitaries, a numerous staff of servants used to accompany the Queen on her journeys to the Riviera. It consisted of a first waiting-woman, assisted by six dressers; a French chef, M. Ferry, with three or four lieutenants and a whole regiment of scullions under his orders; a coachman, an outrider and a dozen grooms and stablemen, for the Queen always took her horses abroad with her and never drove out except in her own carriage.

The suite was completed by the small troop of Indian servants, who preferred to form a little set apart from the others. These impenetrable, impassive and supercilious persons were very fine-looking fellows, clad in big turbans and wonderful cashmere garments of dazzling hues. They acted as a sort of attentive and silent body-guard to the Queen and looked as though they had been struck dumb by the almost religious importance of their duties. They enjoyed a few privileges, such as that of practising all the rites of their creed without restrictions, were thoroughly accustomed to discipline and were faithful and devoted to their sovereign in life and death. The Queen also brought with her a Highland gillie, who wore the picturesque costume of his native land.

All these servants had a great deal to do, especially on the arrival and departure of the royal party, for the Queen always travelled with nearly all the furniture of her bedroom, including the bed and bedding, together with her own linen and plate and all those charming and trifling knick-knacks which adorn English houses.

Lastly, any residence occupied by the sovereign was always filled with magnificent flowers.

The Queen, as everybody knows, preferred to stay at an hotel rather than a villa, for the simple reason that she required a large number of spacious rooms. In the course of the five visits which she paid to Nice, she occupied first the Grand Hôtel at Cimiez and then the Excelsior Hôtel Regina. The first was hired at 40,000 francs for six weeks, the second at 80,000 francs for two months.

As may readily be imagined, a "customer" of this sort was an exceptional windfall for the district; and accordingly everything was done to make her stay pleasant and to satisfy her least wishes. For instance, the local authorities did not hesitate to give instructions for important works to improve the roads of the country-side; and the landed proprietors hastened to offer the illustrious traveller the use of their gardens and even to knock a hole in their walls when these adjoined the grounds of the hotel, so that she might feel at home wherever she went. This charming illusion was all the more easy to realize inasmuch as she was surrounded by a part of her furniture from Osborne or Balmoral, from the handsome Venetian mirror that adorned her boudoir and the little rosewood writing-table, laden with photographs and papers, that occupied its usual place in her bedroom window, down to the mahogany bedstead, that old-fashioned, high, narrow bedstead which had accompanied her on all her journeys during the past forty years.

The days spent by the Queen in this familiar and sumptuous setting were regulated with a great amount of method; and, notwithstanding that this annual visit was looked upon as a period of holiday and rest, I felt as though I were spending those few weeks in the heart of a curiously busy hive, so numerous and constant did everybody's occupations seem to be.

The Queen usually rose at nine o'clock, proceeded to dress and had her breakfast, the constituents of which varied every morning. She would take coffee, chocolate or tea, with which were served rolls, a dish of eggs, fried fish, grilled bacon and Cambridge sausages, things which she hardly touched.

Next came the hour for correspondence. Her Majesty regularly received the Foreign Office messengers who brought the official documents for her signature and the ministerial reports. She carefully read through all the administrative papers and exchanged a considerable number of cipher telegrams with her government; and, as she liked answering by return all letters that required replies, her two secretaries were kept very busy. Add to this that she received daily an innumerable quantity of begging letters, which were handed to me in case they needed looking into. Most of these missives eventually found their way into the waste-paper basket. I have, however, kept a few that form a counterpart to those which I collected when I was with the Shah of Persia and which I mentioned in a previous chapter. They displayed the same methods, the same tricks, ingenious or ingenuous as the case might be, and especially an amazing amount of imagination.

Some had their appeals written by children, hoping thereby to produce a more melting mood in the recipient; others employed threats or sarcasm. The latter affected the most complete confidence in the success of their enterprise, as for instance, an old man of eighty-two, who wrote :

"How painful and repulsive it would be to me, who am so near the grave, to have to alter my high opinion of the royal magnanimity, generosity and benevolence ! "

Others made a display of pessimism :

"If Your Majesty does not lend an ear to my entreaty, there will be no resource left to me but to put an end to my life ! "

I say nothing of the constant appeals for subscriptions to charitable institutions and to enterprises of the most diverse and sometimes fantastic kinds. Nevertheless, special mention must be made of the madmen. A certain Comte de C—— invited the Queen to order her government to replace him in possession of "his Egyptian crown." Another lunatic believed himself simply to be the son of the Queen of England

and suddenly took it into his head to assert his rights, I am bound to say, in exceedingly respectful terms :

"MADAM AND DEAR MOTHER,

"I hear that you are in France at present and I therefore hasten to write and ask you to give a little thought to me, your son, whom you abandoned in India. I cannot go on living in Africa, where I suffer all sorts of wretchedness. Please send me some financial assistance, to enable me to live as I ought to live, that is to say, as a son of the Queen of England ought to live.

"Hoping, dear Mother, that you will have the kindness to satisfy my request, I send you a thousand kisses.

"Your son, who still loves you,
"D—— BEN A——,
"ORAN (*Algeria*)."

These few examples, which I could easily have multiplied, are enough to give an idea of the importance, the diversity and the eccentricity of Her Majesty's "official" mail-bags during her visits to our country. There was no replying to all these letters: it was really impossible. I remember that, one day, one of the Queen's secretaries received the following letter from a dissatisfied correspondent :

"My next-door neighbour, who is something of a scandal-monger, insists that Her Majesty

Queen Victoria graciously awarded me a handsome and generous grant and that you, sir, have pocketed the amount by inadvertence."

We preferred, I confess, chaff and even insults to the despairing epistles which generally ended in a threat of suicide. This means of intimidation, however stale, impressed me sometimes, when I thought I recognized an accent of sincerity in the tone of the letter. I would send one of my inspectors to the address given, so that he might warn me if there were any danger of a catastrophe, and each time he came back and told me that he had found the would-be suicide full of the most excellent intentions towards life.

3

But to return to the daily employment of Her Majesty's time. When the Queen had finished her morning's work, that is to say, at about eleven o'clock, she put on a silk cloak and a large garden-hat to take the place of the white-muslin cap which she wore indoors. Then, leaning on her stick and on the arm of one of her faithful Hindoos, she went down the steps and took her seat in the little carriage drawn by the famous grey donkey, called Jacquot. Jacquot played a part of no little importance at the English court. He had, in fact, been raised to the dignity of a favourite and filled his office with becoming modesty. In no way elated by his unexpected good-fortune, he punctiliously performed the duties of his post, which consisted in taking the Queen through the gardens of the various residences occupied by Her Majesty. Docile and obedient to his royal mistress's slightest whim, he stopped, started, waited, as the Queen might wish, and never showed the least impatience when the royal children pulled his tail or sent their shrill cries down the long funnel of his ears. I myself felt a fond affection for Jacquot, no doubt because I knew him to be my fellow-countryman —he was a Frenchman—and also because of the picturesque story of his life. He might in fact have written his memoirs, like the immortal donkey in Mme. de Ségur's book, and described how, one fine day, he was transferred from the barn of a poor farm in the Haute-Savoie to the royal mews at Buckingham Palace.

It was at the time of the Queen's stay at Aix-les-Bains in 1892. She already found a great difficulty in walking and complained that she had no means of locomotion fit for easy and immediate use and requiring no great preparation. Well, one afternoon, as she was driving by the edge of the Lac du Bourget, she met a peasant jogging along in a small cart drawn by a donkey. The animal was still young, but so thin, so very thin, and so ill-groomed that he was very little to look at. The Queen stopped her carriage and beckoned to the fellow :

" Would you care to sell me your donkey ? " she asked.

Not knowing to whom he was speaking, the peasant replied, with the usual distrust which country-people entertain for those who come from the towns :

" All depends."

" How much did you pay for him ? " asked the Queen.

" A hundred francs . . . and he was cheap at the price."

" I'll give you two hundred. . . . Will you take it ? "

The peasant pretended to hesitate. I said, in my turn :

" You can buy two donkeys with that."

He at last made up his mind. The bargain was struck; and the donkey became the Queen's property and was duly washed, curry-combed, groomed and generally smartened up. Above all, he was better fed. Soon after, he was put to draw the Queen along the little roads and narrow walks which her carriage could not enter. Thenceforth, Jacquot, as he was christened, led an easy, gentle and agreeable life; for the Queen doted on animals and insisted that the greatest care should be taken of all the horses in her stables, without distinction.

When the Queen was about to return to Savoy, in 1893, it was decided that Jacquot should be taken with her on the journey. On the day of his arrival at Aix, the rogue proved that he had a good memory. He broke loose from the waggon in which he was carried, sniffed the air of his native land with delight, took his bearings and scampered away before any one could lay a hand upon him, making straight for the stable where he had been so well looked after in the previous year.

The Queen, when she heard the story, laughed and said to me :

" You will have to change that French maxim of yours which says, ' As silly as a donkey ! ' "

Jacquot, in fact, managed, before attaining middle age, to secure for himself a career which many a court functionary might have envied. Pampered, well-treated and respected, he retired into private life some years before the Queen's death and ended his days at Windsor, where he was treated as the equal of any thoroughbred.

His place was taken by a pony and then by another donkey; and the Queen, who always felt a grateful kindness for her first servant, perpetuated his memory by calling all his successors by the name of Jacquot.

When the Queen returned to the hotel from her morning drive at half-past one, she went straight to the dining-room and did honour to the luncheon which to her represented the chief repast of the day. Then came the afternoon drive—this time in a landau—which generally lasted until nightfall.

Dinner was seldom served before nine o'clock; but, at six o'clock, a sort of side-table was laid in the dining-room, in the Russian manner, with this difference, that, instead of *zakusky*, there was a plentiful supply of cold meats, such as joints of beef and hams, to say nothing of clear chicken-soup in a jellified form. The cooking, however, was invariably French, with the one exception of an excellent dish prepared by the Hindoo cook.

The evening was finished around the lamp in the little royal drawing-room. The Queen adored music and loved to recall the distant period when, as a newly-married bride, she used to sing duets with the Prince Consort to Mendelssohn's accompaniment. Her taste in musical matters included in an equal admiration the serene beauty of a melody by Glück and the expressive sentimentality of an Italian romance; and she would ask Princess Henry of Battenberg, who is a skilled pianist, to sit down and give her a few selections from her favourite composers.

Occasionally, the Queen sent for some great artist passing through Nice to be presented and invited him to play to her. Thus Puccini and Leoncavallo had the honour of performing their works before the august sovereign; and our own poor François Thomé also received a most flattering welcome at her hands. Then, again, I have had the opportunity, in the royal boudoir, of applauding the famous choristers of the Russian Imperial Chapel, who came one year to give concerts at Nice. . . . Quintettes, quartettes, violinists, harpers, mandolinists, all alike, provided they could give proof of real talent, were sure of finding an attentive and delighted ear at the Hôtel Regina.

There were evening concerts; there were also morning serenades. We lived in an atmosphere of music! The morning serenades were provided by the Neapolitan strollers, those wandering singers and guitar-players, who so picturesquely bring home to one the sun of Italy and who, in many cases, are gifted with admirable voices. The Queen liked their songs and was amused by their animated gestures. The whole brotherhood of strummers and scrapers and garden Carusos knew of her partiality and of the generous fee that awaited them; and every morning, at the stroke of ten, some of them would be seen entering the grounds. They crept stealthily to a spot just under the royal balcony, where for an hour at a time, they spun out their *Vorrei morir* and their *Funiculi, funicula!* with all the fervour that consumes them, their eyes—such eyes!—fixed upon the window behind which a curtain rustled and was sometimes drawn to allow a kindly and approving smile to fall upon the floods of melody and the vigorous chest-notes below.

Still, despite the pleasure which she found in listening to the street-musicians, the Queen was passionately interested in the higher manifestations of the art and held our national celebrities in great esteem. M. Saint-Saëns could, I think, tell of the flattering reception of which he was the object each time that he was invited to Windsor or London and of the delicate attentions which the Queen was pleased to lavish on him. I also remember the great impression made upon her by the voice and acting of Mme. Sara Bernhardt when she saw the illustrious tragedian for the first time. It was at Nice, in the spring of 1897. The Queen was at the Hôtel Excelsior and sent to ask Mme. Bernhardt, who was giving a series of performances at Nice, to do her the pleasure of playing before her. The actress agreed to come and play in André Theuriet's *Jean-Marie.* The arrangements were made forthwith. A stage was improvised in the large drawing-room of the hotel by placing a dais at one end of the room; screens took the place of scenery; and the wonderful artist that evening achieved one of the most notable successes of her career, though she had an audience of but thirty or forty to applaud her. Immediately after the fall of the curtain, the Queen sent for Mme. Bernhardt, congratulated her warmly, fastened one of her bracelets round the artist's wrist and presented her with a photograph with a gracious inscription. In return, Sara Bernhardt wrote a line or two in the royal album; and the Empress of India seemed to set the greatest store by the autograph of the queen of art.

Outside these distractions, which were comparatively rare, and when, for one reason or another, there was no music in the evening, the venerable Queen took refuge in reading. She would have a few pages read to her of a modern novel, or an article in some magazine of which the title or the signature had aroused her attention.

It is an interesting fact that those around her had adopted the habit of carefully hiding from her anything which appeared in print of a nature likely to displease or sadden her. This explains her candid and imperturbable optimism: she believed in all sincerity in the goodness of the world in general; and the touching conspiracy, by removing from her mind all reasons to doubt that goodness and allowing her to look upon humanity only under its most comforting aspect, ensured her tranquillity and serenity until her dying day. Those engaged in the conspiracy ended by themselves sharing that tranquillity and serenity, which were reflected in the journal in which she was accustomed every evening, when alone in her bedroom, to jot down the impressions and the most insignificant incidents of her happy and peaceful life.

4

I have said that Queen Victoria's afternoons were mainly devoted to long drives in the country. These drives always caused me a certain anxiety. True, I had the greatest confidence in the good feeling of the inhabitants of Nice. On the other hand, I knew that a fluctuating and cosmopolitan population, such as that of this large town, could easily contain disorderly elements. Knowing beforehand the road which the royal carriage was to take, I used to send well-trained detectives to go on ahead. These generally adopted the dress and manners of tourists; and along the road itself I posted the men at my disposal, men who commonly served as rural policemen and who, unobserved by the public, informed me from place to place of anything that it was useful for me to know. Thanks to these simple precautions and without any further display of force, the Queen was able to go for innumerable drives during her five stays at Nice, not one of which was ever spoilt by the slightest vexatious incident.

The Queen soon came to know all the remarkable places in the neighbourhood. Special guidebooks, illustrated with water-colour drawings, were prepared for her; and I would complete these with verbal explanations. My royal client was interested in the old legends which the popular imagination attached to the works of nature or the traces of the past. She also liked to go to the local festivals, particularly those which recalled the ancient customs of the country, such as the *festin des reproches* and the *festin des cougourdons*. The *festin des reproches* is held at Cimiez, on the first Sunday in Lent. In the old days, young couples came to make mutual admissions to each other of faults committed during the excesses of the carnival. They confessed their misdeeds ingenuously, scolded each other for form's sake, attended a religious service; then they all spread over the market-square, shaded by magnificent olive-trees, over the sands and along the neighbouring paths, where the couples became reconciled, kissed and broke the traditional *pan bagnat* [1] together.

The *festin des cougourdons* also takes place at Cimiez, on the 25th of March, the feast of the Annunciation or Lady Day. It is the most important of all the fairs; and it is attended by over twenty-five thousand visitors every year. There is one great sea of booths and rustic stalls. The Queen was very fond of this quaint exhibition. Almost every year, she went there with the princesses to make purchases; and you can imagine the stall-keepers' eagerness to attract her attention to their wares, to obtain the favour of "purveying" to Her Majesty. On her second visit, she was not a little surprised to find that a large number of gourds or *cougourdes* (whence the name of the fair) were adorned with her coat of arms or covered with inscriptions in her honour. My sleeve was pulled on the left; a voice cried in my ear on the right :

"Have this one, too, M. Paoli! . . . Look, here's a fine one!"

And they filled my arms with gourds. The Queen laughed merrily to see me grappling with the salesmen and especially the saleswomen :

"You will have to buy them all!" she said.

Queen Victoria achieved universal popularity through her kindness of heart, which sometimes suggested the most touching and delicate actions to her. For instance, she had made the acquaintance of a poor mother of a family, Mme. Bessick, in whom she took an interest because one day, when the Queen happened to drive by her cottage, this good woman, although she had only one lilac-bush in her garden, picked all its blossoms to present them to the sovereign. From that time onward, Mme. Bessick was a constant recipient of Queen Victoria's assistance.

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[1] *Pain bênit,* or blessed bread.—*Translator's Note.*

Some time after, when the Queen was driving out with Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein and Lady Antrim, she suddenly caught sight of a small knot of people proceeding along the road in front of us. She at once beckoned me to her and asked :

" What is that over there, M. Paoli ? Is it a procession ? "

" I rather think that it is a funeral, Ma'am," I replied. " But Your Majesty will be able to see in a moment."

It was, as I expected, a funeral, but the poorest, saddest, humblest funeral imaginable. Just a few persons walked behind the hearse, which was adorned with neither trappings nor wreaths. I enquired and found that it was Mme. Bessick being taken to her last resting-place. The Queen thereupon had a touching inspiration. Instead of trotting past the procession, she ordered her coachman to drive on slowly till he came up with it and to follow it at a foot's pace to the cemetery.

Then, taking some large bunches of mimosa which a little girl had thrown into the hood of the carriage, she said to me :

" Please go and lay these flowers for me on the coffin of my old friend, who gave me so many in her time. I owe her that token of my regard."

There was not, as one might be inclined to think, any calculation on her part, any aiming at popularity, in this constant solicitude for the poor, for the humble, for human wretchedness. She was naturally, spontaneously kind; and this sovereign, who knew how to sway the destinies of the greatest nation in the world with so firm and able a hand, revealed the heart of a good woman, in all its middle-class simplicity and all its touching candour, the moment she left her closet and descended from the mighty pedestal on which she cut so great a figure as a " statesman." She took the same serious interest in small things as though a grave and world-wide problem were at stake.

I remember that, one afternoon, the Queen was returning from a long political conference with Lord Salisbury at the Villa de la Bastide, when we met on the road a nurse wheeling a pale and frail-looking baby.

The Queen glanced at it, seemed distressed and, telling the coachman to stop, beckoned the frightened nurse to come to her :

" Is the child ill ? " she asked.

" He's anæmic, Madam : that is why we have come down here from Copenhagen, where the family live. The doctor ordered him to the south."

"That's quite right; but it's not enough. I will tell you what you ought to do for him."

And the Queen carefully explained to the nurse the treatment best suited to the child. Among other things, she advised that he should be given ass's milk. The nurse promised to follow her prescriptions to the letter.

A little while after, we met the nurse and the child again. The Queen stopped the carriage, took the baby in her arms, saw that he had become pink and lusty, paid the nurse a compliment and slipped a piece of gold into her hand. She seemed as delighted with the success of the cure as though the child had been her own.

This maternal solicitude was also extended to animals, as we have already learnt from the happy lot of Jacquot and as was proved by the constant cares which she bestowed upon Spot, the fox-terrier, Roy, the collie, and Marco, the toy poodle. It was shown, moreover, in the instructions which the Queen gave to her outrider to arrange for relays of horses at regular distances, whenever the drive on which we were going was longer or rougher than usual.

Her humanity towards dumb animals was so well known that every member of the royal suite set his wits to work to spare her feelings. The Scotch gillie, for instance, who always sat on the box beside the coachman, felt obliged, in order to please the Queen, to climb down from his seat whenever the horses were going up-hill and walk beside the carriage. Unfortunately, the Highlander was big and fat; and the steeds were mettlesome and in good condition. The poor fellow was in tortures on days when he had lunched at all well and when the ascent was long. After ten minutes' climbing, he would limp along, looking apoplectic in the face, lame and panting. In the end, I took pity on him and, one fine day, suggested that he should get into my carriage, which followed the Queen's. He at first made difficulties, alleging that "Her Majesty might notice" the subterfuge, but in reality I believe he demurred only with a view to saving his self-respect, for it did not take me long to overcome his scruples. He soon acquired the habit of transferring his person to my carriage when the horses embarked upon an ascent; and, as soon as the Queen's landau reached the top of the hill, he would run ahead briskly and resume his seat on the box. Did the Queen "notice it?" She may have done so; but, in any case, as she was very good-natured, she pretended not to see.

5

Her Majesty had a military cast of mind. She showed a kindly interest in our soldiers, especially in those who were posted at the entrance to the hotel and who formed her guard of honour. I had observed that she deigned to cast a friendly glance upon our little *pioupious*[1] each time she passed in front of the company on guard at the hotel or before the sentries presenting arms; and, one day, when it rained, she was much upset because the men were without shelter:

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[1] "Tommies," infantry of the line.—*Translator's Note.*

"Why, it's simply inhuman, M. Paoli, to let those poor soldiers get so wet, when there's no need for it!"

"There has been no time," I explained, "to put up sentry-boxes for them."

"They must have them as soon as possible; and very comfortable ones. . . . Meanwhile, please let them go inside and send them some hot wine from me to drink."

This was quite enough to ensure her popularity with our *pioupious!* On the other hand, I confess that I used to do my best to give the Queen a high opinion of our army. Thus it would often happen, in the course of our drives, that a little troop sprang into view at a turn in the road, pretended to interrupt its drill and stood to attention and saluted as the royal carriage passed. At other times, we would come upon a regiment manœuvring, in the heat of an assault: the artillery would thunder, the rifles crack and a squadron of cavalry dash across country, cheering loudly as they passed our cavalcade, which had drawn up by the roadside. The good Queen would clap her hands delightedly and say:

"How nice they are! How smart they look!"

And thereupon one and all would burst into loud praises of our troops, while I secretly applauded myself on having suggested, planned and, with the complicity of the military authorities, carefully contrived this chance encounter, which had done so much to flatter my patriotic vanity!

Once I was convinced of the pleasure which the Queen derived from military displays, I became ambitious. I felt that any serious proof of Her Majesty's interest and affection for our army was likely to make an excellent impression not only in France, but abroad. I therefore suggested that she should hold a review, on the Promenade des Anglais, of the Nice garrison and of the Alpine battalions from the frontier.

The proposal attracted her at once. Besides, she saw through the political importance which I attached to this manifestation—for she was very sharp-witted—and she showed me, with a charming delicacy, that she entered into my views and that she meant to give it all the significance which I wished her to attribute to it:

"I will not only go to the review," she said, "but I will lay aside my incognito for the occasion and ask the officers of my suite to accompany me in full-dress uniform."

And so, a few days later, on a glorious morning, facing the blue sea, ten thousand men were seen marching past a landau in which sat a venerable lady, surrounded by a brilliant staff, smiling under her white sunshade and even betraying a little excitement. . . . When, at last, bringing up the rear in magnificent order, the smart battalions of Alpine chasseurs swung along in their turn, while their band struck up a telling march, an immense cheer rose from the crowd.

The Queen expressed her surprise that the music should have aroused this exceptional enthusiasm.

" That, Ma'am, is because they are playing the Alsace-Lorraine March," I explained.

" Ah, just so. . . . I understand," she replied, giving me a deep look from her eyes.

6

The Queen had a very nice sense of etiquette and was quick to take alarm if others paid less attention to it than she did.

I remember that she was quite upset in consequence of a little incident that occurred at the time of M. Félix Faure's visit to Nice in April 1898. It happened that, before the President had had time to call upon the Queen, his carriage passed the landau in which Queen Victoria was going for her daily drive. As he was to pay his official visit to the Queen that evening and as he was very punctilious in matters of etiquette, the President considered that he must content himself with bowing. Consequently, when his carriage caught up the royal landau, he made her one of those magnificent ceremonial bows, accompanied by a grand flourish of the hat, of which he alone possessed the secret, and drove on. Now, in the meanwhile, Her Majesty, who was told that the President had recognized her and bowed to her, had at once ordered her coachman to stop, feeling certain that M. Faure would turn back to speak to her. I hoped that he would turn back; but, with his usual correctness of conduct, he did not; and his carriage soon disappeared in a cloud of dust. There was no point in waiting any longer; and we started off again, feeling a little put out.

When we entered the hotel, the Queen asked me, with a shade of annoyance in her voice :

" Why did not the President stop, as I did ? "

" Because he certainly did not perceive that Your Majesty was good enough to expect him to," I replied.

" I call it rather strange," she added.

I hastened, as the reader can imagine, to inform M. Félix Faure of the incident, so that he was able to make his excuses for this involuntary misunderstanding; and I need not say that " everything was arranged for the best," as in M. Alfred Capus' comedies.

For the rest, of all the French presidents whom she had occasion to meet, M. Félix Faure was undoubtedly the one who made the most favourable impression upon her. She liked his showy manner, his wish to please and his obliging nature; in fact, she was always greatly touched by the least attention of which she was the object, being herself very attentive to everybody who had access to her. Thus, in addition to the gifts in money which she distributed with a generous hand, she never failed, on leaving Nice, to present " souvenirs " to all the people with whom she had come more or less directly into contact. With this object, she always brought an enormous supply of trinkets with her on her trips to France. The trunk containing the presents in the royal luggage held enough to stock a jeweller's shop, comprising as it did watches, chains, pins, bracelets, rings, pocket-books, framed photographs and inkstands without number. Her Majesty would delve into it at every moment to reward the zeal of the officials, the police, the railway-people and so on. At the end of her stay, gifts were distributed to over a hundred persons. From the prefect's wife to the gendarme, each received his little leather case; and, wonderful to relate, there was never a blunder committed: no one ever received the same present twice. The Queen remembered exactly what she had given the year before and kept her " gift-book " as methodically as a tradesman keeps his ledger. If the station-master had a pocket-book one year, he had a cigarette-holder the next; and each of these was carefully entered on the Queen's list.

But there is one thing which I shall never weary of repeating, because I was one of the few witnesses of it and one of the privileged accomplices:

the Queen's great heart must be measured and appreciated not so much by her manifest bounties as by those presents and acts of kindness which were deliberately kept secret. I had constantly to put her on her guard against the vampires who, under pretence of poverty, made appeals to her open-handedness.

" Here," she would say to me, in a low voice, " here is a trifle which I want you to take to M. X——, or Mme. Z——; but don't say that it comes from me."

And often she would slip as much as a hundred, or a thousand, or fifteen hundred francs into my hand.

When I knew that the person to benefit by one of these liberal acts of charity was nothing more than a common blackmailer, who was trying to move the Queen to pity, I at once told her so, but never succeeded in convincing her.

" Yes, Paoli," she replied, " I know that I am sometimes imposed upon, but I would rather make a mistake in giving too often than in not giving often enough. Besides, who knows? Perhaps behind that dishonest beggar there is a woman or a child who will benefit indirectly by my alms."

I only once saw her protest—and that very mildly—against the abuse of her generous compassion. There was a worthy legless beggar, a jovial, talkative fellow, who managed to attract her attention by posting himself on her road in his little primitive vehicle drawn by two big dogs. The Queen gave him ten francs each time; and, every year, she sent him fifty francs on the day before her departure. The old beggar, who was a native of Marseilles, ended by looking upon himself as forming part of the English court. He spoke of " Our Majesty " and learnt to jabber a few words of English. At last, one year, he had the impertinence to paint, in red letters, on one side of his go-cart, the official words, " By special appointment to Her Majesty."

When the Queen heard of this, she considered that the cripple had gone too far and asked me to tell him so; but she continued his pension nevertheless.

And thus, every day, at every turn, a thousand minor circumstances proved the infinite kindness of the old Queen's heart and strengthened the links that bound her to our people. I did my best to encourage this sentimental reconciliation, because I considered that my country was bound to benefit by it and because I was already a convinced adherent of the *entente cordiale*, although, at that time, no one had yet dreamt of it!

The Queen, on her side, appreciated my efforts and showed me the most touching gratitude. For instance, I was the first Frenchman to receive the Victorian Order, which she herself conferred upon me at Nice in the year 1896, on the day after that on which she signed the decree instituting the order; and, again, I was invited to attend the Jubilee celebrations in 1897 as her guest. . . . I was, in fact, in her eyes, not only the confidant of her generous thoughts and lesser cares and the guardian of her peace and tranquillity: I was also and above all things the irremovable functionary whom she found faithfully at his post, each time that she came to France. Presidents of the republic followed one upon the other, ministries rose and fell, prefects and generals changed. I alone did not stir, I was always there, giving the illusion of stability in our country where " all is fleeting, all is brittle, all is wearisome."

When I heard the news of Queen Victoria's death, it was to me as though I had lost one of my own family, it seemed as though a chapter—and the happiest chapter!—of my life and my career had been brought to a sudden conclusion.

I cannot better express the sentiment which I felt for the revered sovereign and that which she deigned to show to me than by printing the telegram which I received, on the day after the fatal ending, from her secretary, Sir Arthur Bigge, in the name of the royal family :

" OSBORNE, 24 *January* 1901, 4.15 *p.m.*

" Your sad and faithful sympathy touches us deeply amid our cruel loss. Are most grateful for your touching condolences. We shall never forget your loyal and invaluable services to our august sovereign, who always held you in high esteem and great affection.

"ARTHUR BIGGE."

And I think I am safe in saying that I am not the only Frenchman who has piously preserved the cult of that great figure throughout the intervening years.

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